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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CANADIAN PLAYS PRODUCED PROFESSIONALLY IN TORONTO
DURING THE 1960'S

by



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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Canadian Plays Produced Professionally in Toronto During the 1960's," submitted by L.C. Brissenden in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Abstract

This study deals with the professional productions of Canadian plays in Toronto in the 1960's, with the exclusion of musicals and children's plays. The Arts Theatre Club and Toronto Workshop Productions, the two tavern theatres (Theatre-in-the Dells and the Bohemian Embassy), the Village Playhouse, Aries Productions and Theatre Passe Muraille are surveyed. The productions at the Royal Alex and at the Poor Alex, at the Toronto Central Library and the Colonnade are also studied. Finally, the Canadian Players, the Crest, and Theatre Toronto are explored. The Sixties are notable for the high number of theatre companies which failed to survive the financial and artistic difficulties inherent in Toronto. With the exception of two companies -- George Luscombe's Toronto Workshop Productions, and Theatre Passe Muraille -- all of the companies and groups in this study existed for limited periods only. In spite of this trend, the majority of artists remained undefeated, exhibiting the tenaciousness which marks Canadian theatre.

Appendices of the Canadian plays produced by professional groups, by educational groups and by non-professional and semi-professional theatre groups in Toronto in the 1960's are included. A partial list of the Canadian plays produced in English Canada in the 1960's (excluding the City of Toronto) is also found in the appendices. The number of plays produced both in Toronto and across Canada in the

Sixties, prove that while the Canadian playwright was not well-known, he did exert an influence on Canadian theatre in all areas -- professional, semi-professional, amateur and educational. This influence is growing and strengthening, and a notable change in attitude has taken place. Playwrights are now organizing themselves, defining their goals and making definite suggestions as to how these goals can be implemented. In the early Seventies, the Canadian playwright, after a long decade of struggle, is finally receiving the recognition and financial help which are his due.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

"The amazing thing is not that Canadians write good plays; it's that they write plays at all."

-- Michael Bawtree, playwright.

This paper is an exploration of the working relationship, in the nineteen-sixties, between the Canadian playwright and the professional Toronto companies which produced his plays. It outlines the plays, describes the productions, relates the critical acclaim and the resulting success or failure for playwright and company. Available information regarding the producing groups, their financial state, the playwrights, the directors and related staff is included. Canadian musicals and children's plays are excluded from this study. The main source of information was the newspaper review. Articles from journals and magazines were also used. In general, the amount of available reference material was limited. In certain instances, no related information existed beyond the programme notes.

Professional companies are those in which the majority of the group are people whose primary occupation is in the theatre. In a semi-professional company, the majority are people who work in the theatre on a part-time, recreation-oriented level. In a professional company non-professionals may exist, just as professionals can be

found in semi-professional groups. Educational groups are those which are supported by universities and schools.

The purpose of this study is to show that Canadian playwrights do exist and, what is more, make a valid contribution to the arts in Canada. The playwright is our least known cultural commodity. Few are aware of the extent, for better or worse, of the production of Canadian plays. In the nineteen-sixties, for example, over three hundred original Canadian plays were produced in English-speaking Canada alone; almost one-half of these were produced in Toronto.¹ Only a handful of these many productions received nation-wide, or even local, acclaim.

Theatre in the English-speaking provinces has long been surpassed by its French-Canadian counterpart. French-Canadian theatre has its own definite identity. Lively and popular theatres, both professional and amateur, are maintained with the complete approval of subsidizing organizations. Quebec encourages a professional class of actors, stage managers, designers, directors, and playwrights. In 1962, for example, Quebec and the City of Montreal donated \$595,000 to cultural organizations; in comparison the total grant in the rest of the provinces was only \$505,000.² Playwriting in French-Canada has been notable for its success. Theatre workshops and playwriting societies, as well as the frequent publication of French-Canadian plays encourages development in this area.

¹See Appendices for the listings of these plays.

²Lawrence Sabbath, "Quebec and the City of Montreal . . . ," Performing Arts in Canada, Summer 1963, pp. 12-15.

In English Canada the playwright has had a difficult time establishing himself. Before the Sixties, the production of Canadian plays was mainly in the hands of amateurs, semi-professionals and students. Hart House Theatre on the University of Toronto campus, the Dominion Drama Festival, and local little theatres provided the impetus to stage Canadian plays. The majority of these plays were produced on low budgets, often by inexperienced companies. Publicity was restricted. Small audiences and short-term runs limited public recognition; critical acknowledgment was uncommon. Only a few of the plays were published, and the scripts of produced plays were almost unattainable. Professional productions were infrequent. The majority of Canadian plays were considered inferior to the "tried and true" imports from the United States and Europe. When these factors are taken into account, it is not surprising that the Canadian playwright was considered, at best, to be a rare phenomena. This attitude persisted until the late Sixties when it began to be altered by an increased awareness of the existence and true potential of the Canadian playwright.

Even when prospects were dimmest, the clamour for "the great Canadian play" was always present. The general disappointment in the efforts of Canadian writers was expressed by the Canadian Annual Review, in 1963:

One can only regret that out of several thousand (Canadian) plays that have been written not more than a handful have risen above the level of journeyman entertainment or workmanlike potboilers. Why is it we seem incapable of tackling any subject

in a bold and significant way? Love and hate, success and failure, conflict and frustration exist in Canada, but the dramatic expression of them remains inept, derivative and unimaginative.³

Others renewed the challenge for the future. Gratien G  linas demanded that the Canadian playwright

. . . must not imitate others, he must write for himself, from his roots. A Canadian writing for Broadway is as bad, as queer as an American writing a play for a Quebec audience. Sentiment alone will not create a body of literature, a theatre. A literature expresses a nation which has found its personality. A man must marry; he needs children of his own, a family. Fathers, brothers and relatives are not enough.⁴

G  linas predicted:

Canada is now of age. The time has arrived for us to forsake the paternal hearth and establish our own . . . the public will increasingly reject a theatre that denies it the expression of its own personality . . . The future of the dramatic medium in Canada depends first and foremost on the playwright. Without Canadian authors, the history of our theatre will always be written on the shifting sands of imitation.⁵

In 1959, Canadian playwrights made an impressive showing when the Stratford Festival and the Toronto Globe and Mail sponsored a

³ Canadian Annual Review, 1963, p.478.

⁴ Lawrence Sabbath, "Gratien G  linas Speaks Out on Canadian Playwrights," Performing Arts in Canada, Volume 2, Number 3, p.27.

⁵ Gratien G  linas, Performing Arts in Canada, Winter-Spring, 1964, pp.36-44.

playwriting competition. There were approximately two hundred entries, an optimistic introduction to playwrighting in the Sixties. The winning plays, however, received little or no publicity and were never published. This is typical of the unfulfilled potential of many of the English-Canadian plays written before, and indeed during, the Sixties.

In spite of this haphazard start, however, it soon became obvious that English Canada in the Sixties was aware that the status of the playwright would have to be reconsidered if a satisfying theatrical atmosphere was to evolve. The continued growth and popularity of Stratford and the planned construction of numerous theatre centres across Canada was not enough. The originality of the indigenous playwright was missing and needed nurturing. Grants came from the Canada Council, the Ontario Council for the Arts and from local agencies such as the Metropolitan Toronto Council for the Arts. The Centennial celebrations encouraged original productions.

During the Sixties, there was an obvious increase in the number of Canadian plays staged. In 1960, in Toronto, for example, four Canadian plays were produced by professional companies, and one by a non-professional company. By the end of the decade approximately seventy professional productions, seventy non-professional productions, and forty student productions had been staged.

Many of these attempts proved successful; often, however, the outcome of these productions was detrimental for both the playwright and the company. This was due to a combination of economic and

artistic drawbacks inherent in present day Canadian theatre.

The Canadian government attempted to help the playwright through the donation of grants to the individual or to the theatre producing his works. These grants were simply not adequate for the needs of the playwright. There are, and were, no full-time playwrights in Canada. Men and women writing for Canadian theatre have traditionally held other, more dependable jobs, as teachers, librarians, television and film writers, taxi-drivers, etc. There were a number of drawbacks to the distribution of the playwriting grants. For one thing, these grants were limited in number and amount. Older, better known playwrights were unlikely to receive any financial aid. As Jack Gray pointed out:

There seem to be grants available for youngsters who want to try dramatic writing but there is thin financial support for the established writers who have committed themselves to the theatrical form. If money could be channelled sensibly in this direction, I believe there would be a greater production of Canadian plays.⁶

The Canada Council defined its role as that of "providing a writer with both funds and a practical opportunity to have his play produced."⁷ It donated money to a theatre company which then had the privilege of choosing the playwright whose works they wished to produce.

⁶ Jack Gray, "Four For The Future," Globe Magazine, February 21, 1970, p.12.

⁷ Walter Leslie Whittaker, "The Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences," University of Michigan Ph.D. thesis speech, 1965, p.311.

The author, in turn, was paid by the company. This arrangement was generally unsatisfactory. It was concluded by several Canadian playwrights that the average period of time needed to write a full-length play was twelve months.⁸ Under the system outlined above, few playwrights could afford to devote more than a few consecutive months at a time to their craft. Many Canadian plays were staged, but in general there was:

. . . a vicious circle in which a lack of opportunities to present plays discouraged good writers from writing for theatre and did not allow the embryo writer an opportunity to learn his craft; this then justified the existing theatre companies in being reluctant to produce original plays because there were so few of merit available that the financial risk was too great.⁹

A playwright had a few alternate choices. He might accept a company's patronage and act as a "dramaturge in residence." A position on a university faculty could also be financially advantageous. These situations potentially gave the writer a greater feeling of security while encouraging him to develop his playwriting abilities. On the other hand, "patronage" of any kind might have resulted in further compromise on the part of the author.

In professional theatre box-office failure stigmatizes a playwright. One unsuccessful production may mean the end of a promising career. It is unfortunate that this situation should typify Canadian theatre. Gratien G  linas observed:

⁸Ibid., p.313.

⁹Ibid., p. 315.

If there is no Canadian scene, it's simply because 99% of our plays are imported. We would not have the courage to duplicate what happens in New York where four out of five plays fail regularly, despite all the great experts they have. People get frantic at the thought of a Canadian play failing. Everyone expects there should be a standard in Canada that is not necessary in New York or Paris where failures are the rule but here we want them to be the exception.¹⁰

In Canadian theatre, an unsuccessful run cannot easily be absorbed by the company; a series of failures frequently means the company's demise. A Canadian playwright with one unsuccessful play to his credit is a double financial hazard. Not only is there the chance of a repeated failure to consider but, in addition, his plays often need special attention, rewriting and revision. A longer rehearsal period is necessary but the tight production schedules of most theatre companies forbids this. Consequently, the inherent potential of many new Canadian plays remains unfulfilled. One suggested solution was that

Canadian playwrights need workshops where they can produce their ideas; they need a little encouragement by the audience, by the critics, and they need a huge truck full of experience.¹¹

Opportunities for experimentation and development are more readily available in educational and non-professional theatres. The University of Toronto, for example, produced over twenty-five new plays in the

¹⁰ G  linas, Winter-Spring 1964, op. cit.

¹¹ Jurgen Hesse, "Experimental Theatre, A Lost Effort?", Performing Arts in Canada, Spring 1963, pp.24-25.

Sixties. One advantage to these productions is that financial success is not as crucial an issue as it is for the professional company. One disadvantage is that these efforts usually pass unnoticed. In addition, the calibre of acting and directing is often inferior to that of a professional production. Nevertheless, most of the better known Canadian plays of the Sixties, such as Colours in the Dark and The Ecstasy of Rita Joe, were originally developed in non-professional theatres. Several professional playwriting workshops, such as Eli Rill's Studio, existed in the Sixties to produce and encourage Canadian plays and playwrights. These were valiant, if short-lived, attempts to improve the lot of the Canadian playwright.

In the final analysis it would appear that the biggest drawback for Canadian theatre in the Sixties was the absence of sufficiently large, paying audiences. Toronto lacked a theatre consciousness:

If any constituent of the theatre is noticeably missing, it is the audience; the potential audience which didn't see Trio at the Garret (a dozen there being considered a fair Saturday night audience), didn't go the little extra way up Yonge Street to accept the Goethe Institute's open invitation to the public to see as fine mime as Rolf Scharre, and didn't drop into the coffee -- and candlelight club atmosphere of the Pornographic Onion to see Interview . . . Normally in a city of nearly two million one might expect a hard core to ferret out these kind of shows.¹²

Live theatre in Toronto is one-fourth as popular as films, and a fifth

¹²"Off and On Yonge Street," Performing Arts in Canada, Summer 1969, pp.40-43.

as popular as a sporting event.¹³ This disinterest in live theatre is typical of English Canada at large. Canadians have not yet developed a feeling for theatre. Although this must partly be blamed on the existing state of the theatre itself, and on the perennial lack of adequate publicity, an increased awareness of the true potential of theatre, and consequently of the playwright, is long overdue.

The critic can, of course, play an important role in the development of such a national theatrical aura. Throughout the Sixties, the Toronto critics, for example, encouraged the public to take note of the growth of Canadian theatrical fare. Nathan Cohen, the fiery champion of high standards, Herbert Whittaker, the kindly patron of the underdog and Ralph Hicklin, noted ballet critic and all-round arts reviewer, were the better known of these critics. The reviews of Canadian plays were typically contradictory in nature and usually condemning even when the comments were apparently favorable. Their influence was often discouraging. Performing Arts in Canada believed that the public's dependence on the views of the Toronto critics was too great:

The castigations or faint damns of the critics are often blamed for the financial failure of a production. And indeed the newspaper critics do appear to have a huge influence over the health of the box-office. Is it possible that the people don't want to go to the theatre and are relieved to use the critics as an excuse?¹⁴

¹³ Betty Lee, "Theatre: tried, trad and tribal," Globe Magazine, February 21, 1970, p.4.

¹⁴ Editorial, Performing Arts in Canada, Volume 2, Number 3, 1964, pp.2-3.

On closer appraisal, however, many of the reviews were constructive in intent. They attempted to point out both the positive as well as the negative features of a production, and encouraged further exposure. In fact, the confidence of the critics in the playwriting abilities of their fellow Canadians grew as the decade progressed. Formidable Mr. Cohen, for example, lauded the 1969 University of Toronto production of Songs of the Coal Forest Children, written by student Richard Reoch. In addition to reviews, feature articles on playwrights became more popular in newspapers and magazines and further enhanced the public's awareness of Canadian theatre's growing pains.

This study, insofar as the Toronto theatre scene is concerned, indicates a trend toward greater recognition of our indigenous playwrights. The variety and number of Canadian plays written and produced in the Sixties against high odds reveals a tenacity which foreshadows continued future growth and development. The Canadian playwright gained a firmer cultural foothold in the Sixties. The Seventies, hopefully, will see him established as a valued and essential theatre artist, an integral part of Canadian theatre.

Chapter II

ARTS THEATRE CLUB

The Arts Theatre Club began in 1958 in Toronto. The purpose of the club was to produce plays with Canadian actors, to teach actors their craft, to explore the possibilities of theatre, and to advance theatre art in Canada. Affiliated with the Arts Theatre Club was the Arts Theatre School, of which Sydney Perimutter was the chairman. The president of the Arts Theatre Club was Norman Cowan, and the artistic director of the Club was Basya Hunter.

The Club produced three plays in the late fifties -- An Enemy of the People, The Iceman Cometh and The Great Scholar Wu. In 1960, \$2,400 was received from the Canada Council for a production of The Great Hunger, by Canadian Len Peterson.

The Great Hunger

The Great Hunger was presented by the Arts Theatre Club at the Center Stage Auditorium located on Bloor Street, east of Yonge Street, from November 4 to November 27, 1960. Originally written as a television drama, The Great Hunger was never performed as such. It was rewritten as a radio drama and produced by CBC radio. With the grant from the Canada Council, the Arts Theatre Club developed The Great Hunger as a stage play.

Len Peterson, the playwright, was born in 1918 in Regina, Saskatchewan. Peterson went to university in Evanston, Illinois and then moved to Toronto to become a writer. In an interview Peterson said:

My decision to write was comparable to a Manitoba ploughman deciding to become a ballet dancer. I couldn't spell, had written practically nothing and had acquired no literary background.¹

Peterson began his career selling scripts to the CBC and short stories to Maclean's Magazine. His first play, They Are All Afraid, was produced by CBC radio's "Stage" series in 1944. In 1950, Peterson's novel, Chipmunk, was published. 1960 was an auspicious year for Peterson: two of his plays, The Great Hunger and Burlap Bags, were produced in Toronto; he was working on a second novel, aided by a Canada Council grant.

Peterson visited the Arctic in 1958 on a commission from the CBC drama department. The Great Hunger, a play about Eskimos, resulted from this visit. "I am a Canadian," said Peterson, "and an awful lot of Canada is in the far North."² Peterson believed:

Whatever spiritual steam I get comes from this country. An artist doesn't always learn by going away. Canadian playwrights are not picking up the richest material.³

¹Programme for The Great Hunger, Arts Theatre Club, November 4-27, 1960.

²"Commission to Arctic Inspires Eskimo Play," Globe, October 5, 1960.

³"Lost Cause for Discussion of Playwriting," Globe, January 13, 1960.

The Great Hunger deals with two interconnecting stories of Eskimo life.⁴ A hunter, Kudlu, kills a fellow Eskimo and takes the victim's wife and young son for his own. The son, Noona, reaches manhood and discovers Kudlu's crime. The code of Eskimo life requires that Noona kill Kudlu and revenge his father's death. The sub-plot of the play deals with an Eskimo witch, Saodlu, and a Christianized Eskimo, Pitsoolak. Saodlu and Pitsoolak vie for the emotional support of Kudlu's family. Pitsoolak preaches love and forgiveness; Saodlu demands that Kudlu's crime be revenged. Kudlu and Noona leave the igloo, armed with spears. The witch goes into a trance to predict the outcome of the battle. A great famine, according to Eskimo legend, will fall on the land if one of the fighters does not die. Pitsoolak is overcome with anger and kills Saodlu, then he runs away. Kudlu and Noona return; they have decided to heed Pitsoolak's words of love and forgiveness. Disillusioned by Pitsoolak's madness they leave the igloo to finish their duel.

Kudlu was played by John Scott; his wife, Nukingka, was played by Beth Lockerbie. Saodlu was played by Cosette Lee, and Pitsoolak was played by E.M. Margolese. Barry Lavender played Noona, the son. Bena Shuster played the witch's daughter, and Claude Lee, her husband. Other actors were Joseph Rabinowitch and Garston Rosenfeld. The play was directed by Leo Orenstein and the set designed by Rudi Dorn.

⁴The Great Hunger is available in paperback. (Agincourt: Book Society of Canada, 1967).

Len Peterson's Eskimo characters, according to Nathan Cohen, in the Star, exhibited the same type of emotional problems as their fellow Canadians.⁵ The Great Hunger attempted to dispel the old view of the primitive life of the Eskimo and their constant struggle for survival. Cohen wrote that he did not feel qualified to judge the authenticity of the play as an expression of Eskimo life but he found it

. . . copiously flecked with those qualities of feeling, and reflection on the wonder and mystery of the human condition which are essential for an entertainment to graduate into art. The setting is unfamiliar, but there is far more to The Great Hunger than mere novelty.⁶

Herbert Whittaker, in the Globe, found Peterson's play to be Christian and missionary in spirit.⁷ Whittaker described The Great Hunger as an "atmospheric narrative drama about Eskimos."⁸ The point of reference for the audience seemed to be Pitsoolak, the Christianized Eskimo: "The play thus becomes a struggle between the many and vengeful spirits of the Eskimo and the kindly monotheistic religion of the white man."⁹ However:

⁵ Nathan Cohen, "Emotional Eskimos," Star, November 11, 1960.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Herbert Whittaker, "Eskimo Play Evokes Arctic Religious Clash," Globe, November 9, 1960.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

As it is we will likely still take a long time identifying with these characters. But they can fascinate us, and teach us, and set us to brooding about the guilt of Canadians in improving the lot of the Eskimo.¹⁰

Peterson, as a playwright, according to Nathan Cohen, was "still finding his way."¹¹ The Great Hunger had obvious flaws: the two plots did not always fit smoothly together; Peterson interjected "lectures" on the Eskimo way of life and these disrupted the narrative flow; the motivation of the characters was not always clear; and coincidence played too great a role in the development of the plot.¹² Herbert Whittaker pointed out that the playwright faced a delicate problem: how to write a play which represented Eskimo life and yet was still comprehensible to the average theatre-goer.¹³ Peterson's attempts to inform the audience about Eskimo culture through a narrator-lecturer met with Whittaker's approval, although the critic agreed with Cohen that these commentaries were disruptive.¹⁴ Whittaker also observed that various characters were poorly motivated in their actions.¹⁵ Pitsoolak, for example, reverts unpredictably to barbarism. If the playwright had clarified his character's personalities and behavior there would have been a greater likelihood of audience

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Cohen, op. cit.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Whittaker, op. cit.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

involvement.¹⁶

The director, Leo Orenstein, was an asset to The Great Hunger. Orenstein, wrote Cohen, was "always sympathetic, sometimes subtle, and quite often inventive."¹⁷

The stylized, symbolic set by Rudi Dorn consisted of irregular platforms and skyward slabs of "ice" and created an interesting visual stage pattern.¹⁸ The dramatic centre of the stage was a huge arch which symbolized the Eskimo's igloo.¹⁹ Pools of light zoned the acting areas and the actors not contributing actively to a scene would sit posed on the side of the stage in semi-darkness.²⁰

The final comment about The Great Hunger was made by Ted Allan, a Toronto politician. In a letter to the Star, Mr. Allan expressed his dismay at the apathy of the Toronto public to Peterson's play. He wrote:

Sir: I have watched with some dismay (and cynicism) how one of the most exciting plays ever written by a Canadian -- Len Peterson's "The Great Hunger" -- is playing to half-empty houses at the Centre Stage.

Knowing Torontonians as well as I do, I would like to avail myself of your columns to announce that the play is:

- a) full of sex, as well as
- b) intimate details of lusty Eskimo women,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Cohen, op. cit.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

uninhibited, passionate.

c) I have written Sir Laurence Olivier, Simone Signoret, Anna Magnani and Marilyn Monroe to fly here immediately to see the play before it closes, November 27. (That should attend to big names.)

d) I have cabled Mr. David Merrick of New York and Mr. Oscar Lewenstein of London to fly here with a view of presenting the play in London and New York.

If all this fails, I have suggested to Mr. Len Peterson that he get drunk every night and do a dance (preferably in the nude) in front of the theatre.

I have also suggested that Mr. Peterson leave Toronto.

Ted Allan.²¹

The Arts Theatre Club's 1960 membership was 250, with its headquarters at 99 Avenue Road. The Arts Theatre School, mainly concerned with teaching acting, gave discussions and lectures on plays and playwrights. Leon Major, Marjorie Davies, Bianca Rogge and Charles Jordan were associated with the School.

In 1961, George Luscombe became the director of the Arts Theatre Club. 1961 also marked the end of the Club as a separate entity as a merger with Toronto Workshop Productions, under Luscombe's directorship, was effected.

²¹Ted Allan, "Cry of a Cynic," a letter to the editor, Star, November 22, 1960.

Chapter III

THE COLLECTIVE CREATIVITY OF TORONTO WORKSHOP PRODUCTIONS

In the nineteen sixties, Toronto Workshop Productions presented nine plays by Canadian authors, and four adaptations by Canadian authors of various novels and plays. The method of directing which George Luscombe, the director of Toronto Workshop Productions, employed makes it difficult to assess these plays as the work of any specific author. The plays were rarely given to Luscombe in a finished version and then produced; they were improvised, created by his company in conjunction with the author and then recorded. To understand this method better a brief study of Luscombe's directorial style is necessary.

Luscombe begins with an idea which a playwright, perhaps his "dramaturge," has suggested to him. He then takes the idea to his actors, a small troupe of approximately ten people, who improvise for no specified length of time around the central concept. Characters emerge and conflicts develop within the improvisation. In all of Luscombe's productions there is also a variety of dance, music and song created by the company for the play. The playwright watches the rehearsals, makes suggestions, notes ideas and situations, dialogue and action. After weeks, even months, the play is "written" by the

playwright who contributed the original ideas.

George Luscombe used this method consistently to create his style of Canadian theatre. In the late Fifties, Toronto Workshop Productions existed as a non-professional troupe relying solely on Canada Council and Metropolitan Toronto grants; occasionally it was aided by donations from outside sources. In 1961, the company merged with the Arts Theatre Club and became fully professional. Toronto Workshop Productions is committed to its theatre members to produce a certain number of plays every year. Regardless of increased box office support, the main source of monies is still government grants.

Although critical acclaim has increased over the years Toronto Workshop Productions is never predictable. Since Burlap Bags was produced in 1960, the reception of each new play has varied greatly. Nevertheless, the Workshop continues to experiment in "collective creativity."

Burlap Bags

The first Canadian play which George Luscombe directed for Toronto Workshop Productions was a stage version of Len Peterson's Burlap Bags which had been originally broadcast by CBC radio in 1946, as part of its "Stage" series. Peterson adapted his radio script as a one-act stage play with a cast of six men and five women. The actors playing the supporting roles were: Kenneth Shorey, Tony Moffat, Berna McNeil, Heidy Hunt, Kareen James, Marion McLeod, Benjamin Vass, Tony Pacione, Hal Sheffel and Barbara Armitage. The lead role, "Tannahill,"

was played by John Campbell. The play was presented as a series of flashbacks, some of which were only a line in length. George Luscombe used mime, repetition, juxtaposition of effects, movement, sound and light to heighten the expressionistic qualities of the play.

Burlap Bags opens with two Beckett-like tramps scrounging about on stage in the belongings of Tannahill, a suicide case. In their hunt, the tramps discover Tannahill's "manuscript." They read the manuscript and Tannahill comes back to life. Tannahill condemns society for its greed and hypocrisy; he despises the masses who can only "grope for group feeling."¹ Above all, he criticizes the people who retreat from life into the burlap bags around them, into the false security and shelter these bags provide. Canadians must "accept the challenges that come our way and fight to the bitter end for the glory of life."² The ultimate irony is that Tannahill is finally driven to seek a burlap bag for himself, only to find that they have all been taken.

In 1946, Burlap Bags created a furor. "It became a topic of heated controversy," wrote Maver Moore, "on the air, in the press, in Parliament. Bootleg copies turned up in the United States and are still turning up."³ Burlap Bags "became the prototype of Canadian radio

¹Toronto Workshop Productions, Playbill, 1960.

²Ibid.

³Maver Moore, "About the Theatre," Telegram, 1960.

drama, marked by angry self-mockery and a brilliant use of radio's flexible form."⁴ The play was also successful on stage, although by 1960 the theme of alienation and rejection had become less controversial for Canadian audiences.

Maver Moore praised George Luscombe for his "swift, telling and imaginative staging, notable for the teamwork of all the players."⁵ The characters were "devastating snippets" rather than realistically convincing people.⁶ Burlap Bags was "mordant, unsentimental and beautifully clear."⁷

A Star critic described Burlap Bags as "bitter and caustic."⁸ Certain scenes tended to be overstated, "to pound, rather than prod."⁹ This did not, however, in the Star critic's opinion, negate the outstanding qualities of Len Peterson's play.¹⁰

Maver Moore suggested that the production of Burlap Bags, as adapted for the stage from radio, might encourage similar adaptations of other plays in the future and demonstrate that Canada did have "and may still have -- its angry young men."¹¹

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Star, May 10, 1960.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Moore, op. cit.

Hey, Rube!

Hey, Rube!, an improvised play credited to Jack Winter, opened in February 1960, and ran for thirty-one performances in Luscombe's theatre at 47 Fraser Avenue. It was revived in 1966.

Hey, Rube! began as an unscripted idea -- that of a failing circus. George Luscombe, writer Jack Winter and the actors developed the idea together. They improvised around certain themes and extricated whatever seemed most appropriate to the central idea. Luscombe and Winter kept notes, and finally Winter wrote the script. This process alone continued for three months; Hey, Rube! was in rehearsal for a total of nearly six months.

The Fraser Avenue theatre was decorated to look like the inside of a circus tent: approximately one hundred bleacher seats surrounded the central stage where the play was performed; a thirty foot parachute held overhead by a red pole, set off-centre, created a tent-like effect. The theatre audience became a circus audience. The set for Hey, Rube! took seven weeks to build.

The actors in the 1960 company production of Hey, Rube! were: Joan Maroney, Barbara Armitage, Eleanor Beattie, Heidy Hunt, Marion McLeod, Uranie Pappas, Harold Sheftel, John Campbell, Lowell Patterson, Tony Moffat, David Watson, Ted Young, Allan Watanabe, Glen Reid, Derrick Fields and George Sperdakos. The costumes were designed by Diana Harker, the set designed by Jo Provan, and the lighting designed by Derrick Fields.

Good reviews and word-of-mouth publicity made it possible, after a slow start, for Hey, Rube! to run for five weeks to a total audience of over two thousand. The play closed only because of "outside commitments" of several of the actors. George Luscombe decided not to replace the actors and continue production because he felt that the fabric of Hey, Rube! was too closely knit to the original people.

In Hey, Rube! a circus playing in a small town is going bankrupt. Wagnerian, the ringmaster and owner, refuses to believe that his circus is heading for ruin. In the meantime, his main attraction runs off, a local girl gets involved with the strong man, and the townspeople become increasingly hostile. These mishaps are interspersed with mimed circus acts and also with related songs and music.

Ronald Evans, in the Telegram, wrote that Hey, Rube! was "a circus turned inside out so that the seams show."¹² The play drew the audience into the lives of "the brave, posturing, hopeless souls scratching for life and applause."¹³ The greater part of Hey, Rube! Evans considered to be well-written, with the exclusion of the last fifteen minutes when "the symbols start slipping out of hand," and the play became "limp and lumpy."¹⁴ For the majority of Hey, Rube!,

¹²Ronald Evans, "More Fun Than a Circus," Telegram, February 21, 1961.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

however, Evans felt that "a skilled hand fashioned the bulk of the drama."¹⁵

Herbert Whittaker described the audience's reaction:

We sit among the circus props, are witness alternately to the backstage problems and the acts in the ring. It is an experience that can, as many of us know, make us acutely self-conscious. Such is the simplicity, the unpretentious conviction of the Workshop actors that we are involved without pain.¹⁶

Whittaker described Hey, Rube! as "a thread of circus philosophy expounded by the ringmaster."¹⁷ Luscombe "invests these fragments with a completely absorbing reality."¹⁸ The actors, wrote Whittaker, were: "So completely integrated with their roles and in the story . . . that it is impossible to pick one out against another."¹⁹

Nathan Cohen praised Hey, Rube! as: "Categorically . . . an exhilarating adventure among the theatre arts . . . stands heads, shoulders above most drama productions in Toronto."²⁰

On August 21, 1966, Hey, Rube! was revived for a Sunday afternoon performance in Nathan Phillip Square where it was seen by

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Herbert Whittaker, "Success is scored by Workshop Actors," Globe, February 13, 1961.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Nathan Cohen, Star, February, 1961.

approximately one thousand people. In spite of a large, milling and noisy crowd, Toronto Workshop Productions seemed to manage a successful presentation of Winter's play. The actors mimed acrobatic feats such as walking a tightrope or playing a clown's baseball game. They opened Hey, Rube! by parading from one side of the City Hall Plaza to the other, brightly costumed and creating as much noisy music as possible. The difficulty with sound necessitated that some of the quieter moments of the play be cut, but critic Arthur Zeldin suggested that the use of individual microphones would have allowed the play to be produced in its entirety.²¹

In November, 1966, Hey, Rube! returned to 47 Fraser Avenue. Nathan Cohen, recalling the "total theatre" approach of Hey, Rube! in 1960, commented on the changes which were evident in the 1966 script. In 1960, according to Cohen, Hey, Rube! involved the audience completely with its use of light, music, effects, and mime.²² The plot of the 1960 version of Hey, Rube! was also involving and the audience played a double role.²³ The drawbacks in 1960, wrote Cohen, were found in the text which lacked a dominating theme and a unifying plot-line.²⁴ In addition, the dialogue was uninspired and

²¹Arthur Zeldin, "'Hey, Rube!' was a triumph in the big City Hall Square," Star, August 22, 1966.

²²Nathan Cohen, "Total theatre? Yes, it is . . . but some new text wouldn't hurt," Star, November 26, 1966.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

uncontrolled.²⁵ "When everyone is an author," Mr. Cohen pointed out, "then there is no author, and you lose a central view and ordered shape."²⁶ Cohen felt that as an initial attempt, the liveliness of the 1960 Hey, Rube! promised better things for the future, and thus the production was justified.²⁷ In the 1966 version of Hey, Rube!, however, very little had been altered.²⁸ The introduction was essentially the same; the audience, as it entered, was greeted by the actors doing a variety of things: putting on make-up, sweeping the floor, checking the musical instruments, etc., and a parade around the auditorium followed during which the actors gave away bags of peanuts.²⁹ Hey, Rube! progressed in scenes, alternating from the backstage, interpersonal relationships, to the main stage where circus acts were mimed by the actors: an aerialist sings out her sexual frustrations; a clown is fired for reputedly seducing a local girl; the real culprit admits to the seduction much to the disillusionment of his girlfriend; a young acrobat is killed from a dive off a ladder; and the woman who is in love with him has a nervous breakdown.³⁰

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Throughout all of this the ringmaster worries about finance, the weather, and the futility of life.³¹

The 1966 version of Hey, Rube! had lost its impact for Cohen. This he blamed partly on the textual changes, partly on the fact that the production had a new cast to play the roles which were originally devised for the 1960 troupe. The text of the 1966 revival was dependent on the original troupe of actors for its existence and its energy, and the new actors were unable to go beyond the surface of the play and its characters in their turn.³² The new cast included Frances Walsh, Jess Walton, David Clement, Geoffrey Read, Milo Ringham, John Yesno, S. Livingstone and Frank Norris.

The playwright Jack Winter was born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. He lived in Montreal, then moved to Toronto, in 1960. Winter was Toronto Workshop Productions' "dramaturge" from 1961 to 1966. In 1968, working as a free-lance writer, he was commissioned by the National Arts Centre in Ottawa to write a multi-media work for the Centre's opening festival. The finished play, entitled Party Day, was produced at the Centre's "Studio Theatre" in 1969.

. . . And They'll Make Peace

In 1961, George Luscombe directed . . . And They'll Make Peace, his first production with a fully professional cast. Jack Winter adapted this play from Aristophanes' Lysistrata using modern language

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

and music to update its significance.

Jack Winter, at the time, was a Victoria College English instructor. . . . And They'll Make Peace was created with the aid of a \$2,500 grant from the Canada Council.

The adaption of Lysistrata was a close approximation of the original. The women of Athens and Sparta unite to stop the war. They decide that if they refuse to make love with their husbands until the men end the war, their mates will soon acquiesce. Actors in bikinis open . . . And They'll Make Peace with a stylized parade. A group of old women acting as the chorus are introduced and their presence initiates the sub-plot to take over the treasury. Lysistrata enters and the Greek women gather around her. She persuades the women to follow her plan and they confront the Greek men with their ultimatum.

Edna Usher, of the Telegram, described . . . And They'll Make Peace as "a play about sex . . . bright and bawdy."³³ Usher noted: "a four-letter word wriggles into the dialogue."³⁴

Nathan Cohen commended the use of sound and vocal effects which Toronto Workshop Productions developed for . . . And They'll Make Peace.³⁵ Cohen noted that two groups of women created "two distinct and separate lamentations lapping and blending," which built up into

³³Edna Usher, "Actor's Workshop Premiere: It's Stimulating Stuff," Telegram, December 29, 1961.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Nathan Cohen, "Stereophonic Sound and 'Lysistrata,'" Star, December 29, 1961.

"a whole world of women shrieking their grief."³⁶ The beating of war drums joined the wailing of the chorus. Two bands of men entered, dressed in similar costumes consisting of headbands, noseguards, bare feet and short pants, four wearing burlap capes and four wearing dark green capes.³⁷ These men paired off and, in turn, each pair executed a short, stylized battle-dance, after which the pair assumed a frozen position on stage.³⁸ This brief scene, in Nathan Cohen's opinion, "In its blend of theatre arts, its unity of ambition and result, and the involvement of the audience with the dramatic mood," surmounted in creative excellence, any single moment in Hey, Rube!³⁹ Unfortunately, the remainder of the play was less impressive:

. . . there are 100 (sic) minutes more to reckon with, and in them Mr. Luscombe and most of his players fall so completely on their artistic faces that I simply have not the heart to go into the matter.⁴⁰

Lysistrata was poorly adapted and performed, the characterization and the vocalization were badly handled, the narrative flow was irregular, and the staging was disorganized.⁴¹ Cohen summed up his opinion by

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

saying that if the adaption had been produced in another city it would "immediately be recognized for the claptrap it is and be consigned to merciful oblivion."⁴²

Herbert Whittaker wrote that Winter's script had

. . . a certain nimbleness of wit and uniformity of style which indicated that the playwright is still fairly important in Workshop Productions' scheme of things.⁴³

The dialogue "with the bawdiness natural to the subject" was simple and modern.⁴⁴ As a script, however, "it tends to make its climaxes by inferences," a result, Whittaker believed, of the collaborative, improvisational nature of the Workshop's method.⁴⁵

The set for the play consisted of a platform, designed by Joyce Weiland, "crowned by a fine sculptural element . . . and space for the actors to move around freely."⁴⁶

. . . And They'll Make Peace was greatly revised, cut and expanded during its 1966 run. The cast altered roles, and the theme and characterizations were modified.⁴⁷ As a result of these changes, wrote playwright Winter, . . . And They'll Make Peace became an

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Herbert Whittaker, "Luscombe's Merit Shines in Play," Globe, December 29, 1961.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Jack Winter, "An Experience of Group Theatre," Star, January 27, 1962.

intensely exciting experience for the actors and the audience.⁴⁸ The actors were free to create "in any way and all ways that are true for them and true for their play."⁴⁹ The text varied from night to night in dialogue, order of scenes, and characterization, "but the play remains true and whole, changing as the ingredients change."⁵⁰ Winter felt that the overall idea that "peace may be won by fools but it can only be maintained by men" emerged strongly at last.⁵¹

The main fault of the 1966 version of the play was that it fell "midway between intent and content."⁵² Winter attempted to explain:

Because of the conscious effort to build a weighty superstructure on the foundation of a utopian comedy, the play mixes farce, satire and social statement in an as yet unresolved manner.⁵³

Winter was also dissatisfied with some of the songs which he felt were not successfully integrated with the dialogue.⁵⁴ In addition, he felt the actor-audience rapport was inconsistent, and the ending of the play rather abrupt.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Winter believed that Toronto Workshop Productions was accomplishing something more permanent than the creation of "the perfect play":

. . . a close-knit group of creative theatre people: actors who will form as well as perform their roles, directors and writers who will be guided by the play rather than impose their will on it, critics who will gear their analyses to the play as it grows . . . and, most important of all, audiences who will participate in the experience of theatre rather than merely react to it.⁵⁶

The Evil Eye

In 1962, George Luscombe took three one-act plays on a summer theatre tour of Ontario. The plays were The Boor and The Marriage Proposal, by Anton Chekhov, and The Evil Eye, Jack Winter's adaption of a Pirandello play. Once again Winter "devised" this adaption with the help of Luscombe's Workshop troupe. These three plays formed the repertory of Luscombe's summer "Theatre 35."

In The Evil Eye, a poor Italian woman, with two daughters and an ailing husband to support, attempts to get a judge to convict her of having an "evil eye" so that people will be impressed with her and her business will improve. The five actors in The Evil Eye -- Tony Moffat-Lynch, Barbara Armitage, Sonja Livingstone, Eleanor Beattie and Douglas Livingstone -- developed the characterization and dialogue of the play according to George Luscombe's improvisational approach.

⁵⁶Ibid.

The Evil Eye opened with the actors appearing one by one, whistling a variety of bird calls. These calls became a tone poem at the end of which the judge entered with his pet bird. The actors played multiple roles, and used mime and special sound effects throughout the play. The actors were always conspicuous, creating the sound effects and making costume changes in full view of the audience.

Of the three touring plays, Winter's adaption was the best received by critic and audience. Nathan Cohen wrote that The Evil Eye was "Of a much more adventurous nature theatrically, and far more secure in execution."⁵⁷ Winter's adaption was "more diversified, more intrinsic, more effectual" than The Boor and The Marriage Proposal.⁵⁸ The Evil Eye was "a comic anecdote with larger connections well and refreshingly told."⁵⁹ Ronald Evans, in contrast, described The Evil Eye as "an ironic fragment . . . with all the Workshop tricks and tenets . . . trotted out."⁶⁰ He claimed the actors "with this tailored to measure piece . . . work; that is they work the way Mr. Luscombe wishes them to . . . mechanically."⁶¹

After the tour, the trio of plays moved into the 47 Fraser Avenue theatre for a Toronto run, in September 1962. The theatre had

⁵⁷ Nathan Cohen, "Three Demonstrations of the Comic Form," Star, September 15, 1962.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ronald Evans, "A Depressing Trio," Telegram, September 27, 1962.

⁶¹ Ibid.

been redecorated, with padded seats, arranged on three sides of the stage, added for the comfort of the audience.

Before Compeigne

Before Compeigne, which Toronto Workshop Productions produced in 1963, gave Jack Winter another opportunity to work with Luscombe's company. The play is about Joan of Arc in her final days. Joan has been defeated and is camped with the remainder of her troops outside the walled city of Compeigne. The Countess of the city, Catherine, comes to the campsite and lures Joan back into Compeigne by telling her that there are no soldiers inside and that Joan's men will receive food in return. Joan acquiesces and finds that Catherine has tricked her. Her soldiers are killed and Joan is asked to choose between either an alliance with her rival the Duke of Burgundy, or death. The Countess tries to convince Joan that an easy life in the court, fine clothes, comfort, and sexual pleasure, are as valuable as Joan's ideals. Catherine and Joan warily circle each other while a chorus of four captains recite an historical outline of the times, past and future.

In Before Compeigne Joan was not the slim, boyish, gentle visionary figure of other "Joan of Arc" plays. Joan here is a tough soldier accustomed to the barracks and the rough men around her. Jack Winter, wrote Herbert Whittaker, showed Joan "stripped of ecclesiastical beatification, a coarse, disillusioned peasant woman, her faith all but

shattered . . . by the pettiness of the rulers of France."⁶² Joan Maroney, the actress playing Joan, had "scraped hair and a sturdy figure. She plays with a steady vitality, has a rough tenderness as well as a country sense of humour."⁶³ Winter's Joan, was "far more cynical, surprisingly, than Anouilh's. She is rough, bawdy, and suspicious. She is not without faith, but her voices stopped coming to her at Rheims."⁶⁴

Nathan Cohen wrote that Jack Winter had created a Joan "temperamentally and ideologically one of us."⁶⁵ She is disillusioned, doubting and lonely. Faced with temptation, Joan struggles to resolve her fears and her ideals.

The Countess, played by Gerardine Douglas, was a sophisticated, regal, politically-oriented visionary. Ronald Evans described her as "shrewd, seductive and stately . . . lovely as a stiletto and just as lethal."⁶⁶ The Countess is the antithesis of Joan. A third character in the play is François Villon, the French poet-priest, updated thirty years in history. Villon acts as the middle-man between Joan and Catherine. He vacillates between the two women "fascinated by this

⁶²Herbert Whittaker, "A Dramaturge's Daring," Globe, October 21, 1963.

⁶³Herbert Whittaker, Globe, December 14, 1963.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Nathan Cohen, "Before Compeigne," Star, December 19, 1963.

⁶⁶Ronald Evans, Telegram, December 14, 1963.

duel between faith and selfishness, and unlike Joan without even an unconscious sense that he too has a date with history."⁶⁷

The writing in Before Compeigne received critical approval. To Ronald Evans, it was "poetry stitched like crystal threads through the tapestry of prose."⁶⁸ Herbert Whittaker wrote that Winter, who had never written for any other theatre company, certainly knew how to write for Toronto Workshop Productions: "Before Compeigne takes place (like the film 8 1/2) on several different levels of time and place, at the same time, yet the overall effect is exciting rather than confusing."⁶⁹ Nathan Cohen felt that Luscombe's stress on ensemble had damaged Before Compeigne.⁷⁰ The actors removed themselves from the specific environment and consequently this very environment was weakened.⁷¹ Themes became less definable, because Luscombe seemed more concerned about the interrelationships of the characters than he was with the character's individuality.⁷² Luscombe's respect for the playwright was real but his creative force was too dominant to be hemmed in by a script of rigid structure.⁷³ In Before Compeigne:

⁶⁷ Cohen, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Evans, op. cit.

⁶⁹ Whittaker, op. cit.

⁷⁰ Cohen, op. cit.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

There is an acute loss of focus. The devices are often banal. The actors flounder about on a landscape without guidelines. The climaxes are reached at the wrong time and have the wrong stress. The effects misfire. No production of Mr. Luscombe is ever completely a waste, but on occasions like these in essential terms it turns out to be naggingly, harrassingly and crucially inadequate.⁷⁴

Before Compeigne, according to Cohen, was developed beyond its capabilities.⁷⁵ The play itself was witty and intelligent, and had the beginning of a good story line.⁷⁶ But for Cohen, Before Compeigne failed because among other things, it was augmented with additional dialogue and additional story-line.⁷⁷ In Winter's play Joan commits suicide, and the Countess is burned to death. The irony of this was not sufficiently accented by the actors, under Luscombe's direction.⁷⁸ Cohen also felt that Luscombe's visual treatment tended to be overdone. In one scene, for example, an overhead light reflected the red of the carpet onto Joan's sword "to register the symbolism of her fiery end."⁷⁹ In general, Cohen claimed:

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Mr. Luscombe has done his playwright a disservice, and once again has called attention to a chronic failing in his own work, one which he must overcome if his efforts are to take healthy roots.⁸⁰

In April 1964, Before Compeigne returned to Toronto Workshop Productions' repertory. The Workshop produced the play for Theatre-in-the-Market in the Colonnade Arcade. The 1964 version was a revision of the original 1963 version. The new production, described by Ralph Hicklin as "a free-wheeling drama-cum-vaudeville," was more comic than the original; Joan was still a hard-headed soldier but now she had a sense of humor.⁸¹ Joan dons a skirt and mimics the feminine ways of the Countess. She is also more sexual. In another scene, she and Villon bed down together in the Countess' barn. One of the major changes was that Joan was less the centre of attention. Two clowning figures, Dijon, a soldier, and Muchmore, an unlanded gentry-man, were added to comment on the main theme with song, dance, slapstick comedy and mime.⁸² The two clowns, remnants of the original chorus of four captains, took much of the audience's attention away from Joan.⁸³ Other characters had also undergone changes. The priest, Villon, became a more effeminate character, although still naive about the ways of the

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ralph Hicklin, "Knockabouts Enliven an Unsaintly Joan," Globe, April 4, 1964.

⁸²Ronald Evans, "The Theatre," Telegram, April 4, 1964, p.7.

⁸³Ibid.

world.⁸⁴ A variety of instruments -- trombone, ocarina, tambourine, and drum -- provided a musical background for the 1964 production.

For all its additional theatricality, the strength of the new version of Before Compeigne seemed less than that of the original, in the opinion of Ronald Evans.⁸⁵ The constant fun-house of the clowns, while fulfilling a necessary commentary function, distracted him and Villon "the intriguing seminarist" of the 1963 production had become "little more than a callow simpleton, whose development is arrested about six minutes after his first appearance."⁸⁶

Ralph Hicklin found the 1964 production of Before Compeigne "an excellent showcase for a Luscombe production."⁸⁷ It seemed as if the play had been rewritten with the actors in mind.⁸⁸ This resulted, however, in a weakening of the script itself; there was not the "final, single impact which its separate moments promised."⁸⁹ The actors themselves received praise. "They have undergone great difficulties," wrote Hicklin, ". . . in rehearsing in an unfinished theatre; as an ensemble, they worked with a skill and a rapport that gave no hint of hardship."⁹⁰ Vocally, however, there was a tendency for the actors to

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Hicklin, op. cit.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

be too loud for the small 200-seat Colonnade Theatre.⁹¹

Dorothy Mikos, in the Star, wrote that the characters in Before Compeigne were not well-defined.⁹² The mood of the play slipped "from comic to portentous leaving only confusion in its wake."⁹³ Victoria Mitchell played a "rather charming" Joan of Arc, Villon was "young and relatively innocent," and Catherine was "an enigmatic noble lady."⁹⁴ One actor represented the remainder of Joan's army and one musician created the music for the play.⁹⁵

In 1964, Before Compeigne won Jack Winter the Toronto Telegram award for "Best New Canadian Play of the Year." In July of 1965, Before Compeigne alternated with The Mechanic, another Jack Winter play, at the Theatre-in-the-Park, Stratford, Ontario.

The Death of Woyzeck

The Toronto Workshop company, again with Jack Winter and George Luscombe working together, adapted Büchner's incomplete play Woyzeck. Entitled The Death of Woyzeck, the first production of this adaptaion was in 1963; a second revised version of the adaptation was produced in 1965. The playwright John Herbert had originally been retained to make the

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Dorothy Mikos, "It's the same old 'Workshop'," Star, April 4, 1964.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

adaption but due to personal differences, Herbert had been replaced by Winter. Herbert's version was later produced at the Garret Theatre under the title The World of Woyzeck.

The opinions of the Toronto critics on Toronto Workshop's version of The Death of Woyzeck give an indication of Luscombe's approach to the playwright. Mark Czarnecki, of Varsity, wrote that Winter estimated that between forty percent to fifty percent of the material of the 1965 production was Büchner's, the remaining fifty percent to sixty percent was devised by Toronto Workshop Productions.⁹⁶ The dialogue of the original play had been rewritten, different themes emphasized, and the characters manipulated and transposed.⁹⁷ The three female characters, for example, were reduced to one character, "partially because of an inopportune pregnancy, but mainly for valid dramatic purposes."⁹⁸

Nathan Cohen described the 1963 production as "astringent and vivid . . . it captured the play's essential nature . . . tumultuous yet orderly, nightmarish yet crystal clear, colorful yet spartan, a synthesis of content and performance."⁹⁹ This was achieved in spite of Toronto Workshop Production techniques which "necessarily operate against the playwright's will."¹⁰⁰ For the Toronto Workshop, wrote

⁹⁶Mark Czarnecki, "Workshop Grows Up," Varsity, November 11, 1965.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Nathan Cohen, Star, January 13, 1965.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

Nathan Cohen:

The writer is just one of the many participating agents. The text is, in the full sense, a collaborative effort. Furthermore, it is never finished. Revisions continue in performance. There is never such a thing as a finished, completed play.¹⁰¹

The 1965 production was inferior, in Cohen's opinion. The revised version was "wordier," and more symbolic.¹⁰² Woyzeck's sexual problems predominated.¹⁰³ The outlook of the new version was that of "a kind of fatalistic acceptance . . . an amorphous, chichi dirge of recognition."¹⁰⁴ An original play was better suited to Luscombe's theatre; the company could work with an original, change it and develop it, to suit the goals of the group.¹⁰⁵ With a play like Büchner's Woyzeck, Luscombe was too restricted by the strong and independent character of the drama.¹⁰⁶

Herbert Whittaker summed up the relationship between the Workshop and the playwright, Jack Winter:

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Closely involved in this creation is Jack Winter, Workshop Productions' dramaturge, who extracted the text from the Luscombe variations on a theme by Büchner. Winter's touch is plainly traced, and the present piece especially in its juxtaposition of time elements, follows closely upon his recent work, Before Compeigne.

Winter's contribution is complimentary to the imagination of Luscombe, and the two are backed by a group of talented players who can combine personality and experience in the improvisational techniques Luscombe employs.

In many respects, Luscombe's latest finds him at his most creative, most integrated and most experimental. The Death of Woyzeck will be seen by all who have followed this unique contributor to our theatre, our only true experimentalist.¹⁰⁷

The Mechanic

1964 saw the debut of another Jack Winter play, The Mechanic. This play premiered at the University of Waterloo Workshop from July 20 to August 3. It was to be a part of a new long-range plan for university theatres. Professional companies, such as Toronto Workshop Productions, were to tour Ontario schools and produce their plays for the students and faculty. In the summer of 1965, The Mechanic was also produced at Stratford, Ontario, on an outdoor stage set up on the green. The play had been revised for the Stratford run. In October, 1965, The Mechanic opened at 47 Fraser Avenue in Toronto. In November, it was presented for one night at the Edward Johnson Building of the University of Toronto as part of the Ten Centuries Concert Series.

¹⁰⁷ Herbert Whittaker, "Luscombe's Theatre Continues Evolution," Globe, January 13, 1965.

The Mechanic is a farce-comedy consisting of a series of scenes which deal with the antics of a father, a mother, their daughter Lucinda, her "beat" boyfriend Shade, a nefarious garage mechanic, his young assistant, and a family maid. The mechanic impersonates a doctor and tries to cure the hypochondriac daughter while robbing the father and mother of a large proportion of their money. The father develops into a health maniac and eventually gets his seat stuck in a tuba pursuing his quest for good health. The mechanic is successful and cures the daughter who promptly gives her boyfriend up and runs off with the mechanic's handsome assistant.

In the 1964 version the actors were: Yvonne Adalian, Victoria Mitchell, Gwen Thomas, Edward J. Kelly, Donald Meyers, Douglas Livingstone, Larry Perkins and Edward J. Sanders; in the 1965 version: Edward J. Kelly played Mr. Grappler, the father; Lyndsay Punchard, Mrs. Grappler; Mary Jess Walton, the daughter Lucinda; Larry Perkins, Shade; Donald Meyers, Murphy the mechanic; Edward J. Sanders, the Doctor; Victoria Mitchell, Annette the maid; Douglas Livingstone, Harry the Assistant; and Gregson Winkfield, Simkin.

The difficulties involved in playing at Stratford in 1965 were numerous. The weather was inclement, a staggered performance schedule made life more arduous for the actors and, in addition, audience attendance was poor.

When The Mechanic moved to Toronto, critic Herbert Whittaker found the revised version "still highly inventive and high-spirited,"

filled with improvisation and caricatures.¹⁰⁸ The mime and movement in the play was well done, yet "at other times, the rushing about to words comes close to tedium."¹⁰⁹

Mark Czarnecki, commenting on the Toronto production in Varsity, summed up The Mechanic as a play about the way modern technology tends to make human beings into machines, and machines into human beings.¹¹⁰ Czarnecki felt that the Edward Johnson stage was better suited to the play than the stage at 47 Fraser Street because a larger playing area gave the audience a better view of the overall production.¹¹¹ Musician Ron Collier was commissioned by the Ten Centuries Concert Series to write a score for the play. This score, reminiscent of Dixieland jazz with a stress on drums and trumpet, replaced the taped Dave Brubeck records Toronto Workshop Productions had been using at 47 Fraser Avenue, and was a great improvement.¹¹²

The first act of the revised 1965 version, according to Ronald Evans moved

. . . briskly amid a blizzard of witty dialogue to a smashing mime conclusion that presents one full-scale traffic jam in a masterpiece of choreography, skull-splitting sound and flashing lights.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Czarnecki, op. cit.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ronald Evans, "Mechanic Brings Back Bounce," Telegram, November 11, 1965.

Evans described The Mechanic as ". . . a satiric review, a loose and fluid bundle of scenes."¹¹⁴

Nathan Cohen described the traffic jam scene in greater detail in his review.¹¹⁵ The Workshop actors, without leaving the back of the stage, simulated the effect of an ear-splitting, pandemonium-filled traffic jam. The actors swooped like birds about the stage, veering close but never actually colliding with one another. Traffic signals flashed, wheels roared, lights of all colors filled the stage, flashing in time with the traffic lights.

Cohen suggested that Winter's play was "a morality farce in the tradition of Ben Jonson."¹¹⁶ By using the automobile as the symbol of the dehumanization of the individual by technology, Winter had presented a picture of the power of the mechanic over human life.¹¹⁷ The mechanic operating on the car which had revolutionized our life was in some way deserving of our awe and respect.¹¹⁸

In spite of the fast pace and ingenuity of The Mechanic the play still struck Nathan Cohen as being boring and one-dimensional. Jack Winter's play became the Toronto Workshop Productions' vehicle and because of "co-operation gone riot" the theme was distorted and lacked

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Nathan Cohen, "much to admire in 'Mechanic,' nothing to feel," Star, October 16, 1965.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

clarity.¹¹⁹ The play was "clever, slick, but sterile, as well-plated and filled with the latest accessories but with a critically defective engine."¹²⁰ The characters were caricatures, without the playwright's creative control the actors ultimately dehumanized themselves.¹²¹ Once again, Cohen criticized the directing techniques of Luscombe. In "his inflexible devotion to the concept of company" Luscombe seemed to be approaching "the same immobilizing mists" which brought about the demise of the Joan Littlewood theatre company in which Luscombe had once worked.¹²²

The Golem of Venice

The fourth new play devised by Jack Winter with the aid of George Luscombe and Toronto Workshop Productions, was first presented in July 1966 at Stratford's Theatre-in-the-Park. Originally entitled New Show, the play was later called Happy Birthday, Death. In 1967, Happy Birthday, Death was renamed The Golem of Venice. The Golem of Venice toured Queen's University and the University of Western Ontario in 1967, and also played a one-week run at "Expo" in the Youth Pavilion Playhouse. The Golem of Venice opened at the Fraser Avenue theatre in April, 1967.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

At Stratford, in 1966, New Show was one of the repertory of four of Winter's plays presented by Toronto Workshop Productions; the other three plays were: The Mechanic, Before Compeigne and Hey, Rube! The four plays ran from July 15 to August 14 at Stratford.

New Show combined the trial scene from The Merchant of Venice and a Jewish folk tale about the Golem, a monster fictitiously created by the rabbis of the Middle Ages to protect the Jews from pogroms. In the play, the Golems become power-hungry and take over the city themselves.

New Show was first retitled Happy Birthday, Death because the opening performance at Stratford coincided with the anniversary of the detonation of the first atomic bomb in Nevada. The play's new name, when it was first announced, apparently shocked the small Stratford audience.¹²³ The content of Happy Birthday, Death was, however, comic enough to alleviate and partially conceal Jack Winter's more serious sentiments, according to Herbert Whittaker.¹²⁴ The characters which Winter appropriated from The Merchant of Venice -- Portia, Skylock and Antonio's widow -- helped "to further conceal his (Winter's) sombre intent."¹²⁵ In addition Happy Birthday, Death mingled incantations and arguments with children's nursery rhymes accompanied by the music of a glockenspiel.¹²⁶

¹²³ Herbert Whittaker, Globe, July 23, 1966.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

The main theme of Happy Birthday, Death, wrote Nathan Cohen was "that economic interests supersede racial different." ¹²⁷ Happy Birthday, Death was better written than Jack Winter's previous plays, maintaining "renewed attention to fidelity of theme," and also exhibiting "a fresh awareness in the production of the value of language." ¹²⁸ The dialogue and acting were marked by "generally . . . a buoyancy and humour, and a direct relationship to character, seldom manifest in recent seasons." ¹²⁹ The major failure of Toronto Workshop Productions had been their "lack of a categorically critical point of view." ¹³⁰ Happy Birthday, Death expressed the first "genuinely radical temper" since the production of Hey, Rube! ¹³¹

Ronald Evans, in the Telegram, criticized Happy Birthday, Death for utilizing "deja vu staging . . . visual ploys he (Luscumbe) exhausted at least three years ago," and "overfamiliar 'effects'." ¹³² Evans hoped that George Luscombe would "maintain some momentum, that he keep pushing ahead into exciting, untried staging in this, the eighth year of his theatre's operation." ¹³³

¹²⁷ Nathan Cohen, "'Popular' and 'Commercial' aren't always the same," Star, July 25, 1966.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ronald Evans, Telegram, January 22, 1966.

¹³³ Ibid.

Happy Birthday, Death was retitled The Golem of Venice for its fall 1966 opening in Toronto. The play was now set specifically in Venice, in 1492. The production opened with the cast stepping out of a huge prop box and parading around the stage. The actors then began the trial scene from The Merchant of Venice, with Shylock and Portia again pitted against one another. Shylock is more concerned with the discovery that an anti-semitic movement has begun in Spain and Turkey. The Jews, to protect themselves, build a Golem, a giant man of clay. The Golem-builders lose control of themselves and build more and more giants. The Golems take over Venice. References to fall-out, contamination and maximum yield strengthen the original analogy of the atomic bomb to the Golems.

In April 1967, The Golem of Venice returned to Fraser Avenue. Herbert Whittaker, commenting on the continuing development of the play, pointed out that the director and the playwright often seemed in opposition with one another.¹³⁴ The Workshop used a number of devices, such as a loudspeaker with news reports, and Whittaker expressed the wish that the playwright ". . . would trust his audience more and allow the play's perspective -- linking his Venice and our world -- to develop without the electronic nudge."¹³⁵ Winter's writing was "already so staccato and involuted that we would welcome more opportunity to concentrate on it."¹³⁶ The cast was "in a fine state of discipline,

¹³⁴ Herbert Whittaker, Globe, April 3, 1967.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

barking out their epigrammatic ripostes, perfecting their characteristic chicken-walk and using Nancy Jowsey's ingenious setting and costumes to much effectiveness."¹³⁷ It was the content of the 1967 version of Winter's play, and not the production of it which seemed to be at fault.¹³⁸

The Good Soldier Schweik

In 1969, Toronto Workshop Productions presented an adaption of the book The Good Soldier Schweik by the Czechoslovakian Jeroslav Hasek. Michael John Nimchuck, who had been a playwright since his University of Toronto days, wrote the adaptation on a commission from George Luscombe.

The Good Soldier Schweik revolves around Schweik, a basically simple man, but an underdog. Against his will Schweik leaves his pleasant life as a dog-seller to join the army. Schweik arrives at the induction centre in a wheelchair pushed by his landlady, but the army sees through his ploy and he is inducted. He somehow manages to muddle through training camp. Then, because he cries in church, Schweik is made the orderly of a drunken chaplain. The chaplain loses him in a game of cards to a handsome lieutenant. The lieutenant, in turn, loses one of his girlfriends to Schweik. Due to Schweik's misguided efforts to serve him, the lieutenant is sent to the front lines.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Schweik deserts, then somehow also ends up at the front. At the end of the play Schweik, alone on stage, repeats the names of the people he knew who died in the war.

Schweik is a man incapable of hating anyone, even the enemy. He constantly tries to help others and is constantly getting into trouble because of his attempts. Ray Whelan played Schweik with an Irish accent. His characterization of Schweik was, according to Leonard Coates in the Telegram, "delightfully inoffensive . . . stumbling from frying pans to ever-hotter fires."¹³⁹ Herbert Whittaker found Schweik:

. . . a friendly soul . . . not as stupid as he might be, but no great intellect either . . . no Harlequin hero, surviving through nimbleness. Schweik plods, is obedient, willing to please; and the fun of him is that he manages to extricate himself, always by accident, almost every time.¹⁴⁰

Nathan Cohen thought Whelan:

. . . so phlegmatic with his hangdog look, sucking on his pipe, that you are never sure how much of him is guile, how much stupidity. Yet the ambiguity helps the role, and he is always affecting.¹⁴¹

For Whittaker, Nimchuck seemed to have caught the spirit of the

¹³⁹ Leonard Coates, "Workshop Production -- Soldier Schweik, prince of losers," Telegram, February 27, 1969.

¹⁴⁰ Herbert Whittaker, "Soldier Schweik saga splendidly staged," Globe, February 27, 1969.

¹⁴¹ Nathan Cohen, "Two Folklore pieces: Schweik passes muster but Megilla Misses," Star, February 28, 1969. p.26.

original novel

. . . in pleasantly, unaggressively colloquial language. Some of Schweik's anecdotes lack sharpness, perhaps, but then perhaps TWP's [sic] Schweik, Ray Whelan, may not have found the richness of character yet to keep these fully interesting.¹⁴²

Nathan Cohen commented that the play was written in "an episodic, rambling form" which "serves the comic effects well enough."¹⁴³ He criticized the second act: "Events begin to sag . . . the slapstick veers into softheartedness," and the ending is "maudlin."¹⁴⁴ The Good Soldier Schweik, according to Leonard Coates, was

. . . a conventional, amiable commentary on bureaucracy in and out of uniform . . . Nothing here will disturb, jar or shock people. Nor will anything be found to explain the underlying folk and satirical qualities of the Hasek novel.¹⁴⁵

Nevertheless, for Coates, the adaption was: ". . . a strong writing job by Nimchuck. His dialogue is forceful and extremely funny in spots, but never loses sight of the central anti-war theme."¹⁴⁶

There were seven men and two women in the cast of The Good Soldier Schweik. The actors, with the exception of Ray Whelan, played

¹⁴²Whittaker, op. cit.

¹⁴³Cohen, op. cit.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Coates, op. cit.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

multiple roles. Even Schweik's dogs, at one point in the play, were impersonated by the actors. Both Nathan Cohen and Herbert Whittaker commented that the actors had improved vocally. Cohen wrote: "Each performer is audible and intelligible. That's surprise enough."¹⁴⁷ Whittaker added: ". . . almost every word of Michael John Nimchuck's workable new version of Schweik is heard. What's more, it makes its point."¹⁴⁸

Cohen once again felt that Toronto Workshop Productions had not advanced in the development of their working methods: "There is no evidence of any advance in technique or clarification of political thought, only a more dexterous negotiation of reliable images and devices."¹⁴⁹ Whittaker, in contrast predicted that The Good Soldier Schweik

. . . may grow into one of Luscombe's best productions; as it is, it has clarity, charm and great style. Anybody who questions what our city fathers get for their municipal aid, has only to visit this production. The answer is a theatre of daring and distinction.¹⁵⁰

In general, Luscombe's approach was actor oriented, as opposed to playwright oriented. The actors were free to improvise and to

¹⁴⁷Cohen, op. cit.

¹⁴⁸Whittaker, op. cit.

¹⁴⁹Cohen, op. cit.

¹⁵⁰Whittaker, op. cit.

change within the context of the play. Not all playwrights would appreciate having their work manipulated in this way. The approach, in itself, did not always result in a successful production. Nevertheless, there were successes both for the playwright and the company.

Luscombe, as a director, developed a very definite style for his productions. His use of music and song, dance and mime, drew attention away from the plays themselves and focused the audience on the actors as a company. According to Luscombe's most vehement critic, Nathan Cohen, this concentration was most often to the playwright's detriment. Many of the Toronto critics voiced this opinion, as did several of the playwrights who, at one time or another, worked with Luscombe. Nevertheless, Luscombe's company gave a number of writers an opportunity to see their plays produced. The method for developing these plays was experimental and placed the onus on the company. On the one hand, this deprived the playwright of a considerable responsibility; on the other hand, it gave the playwright a chance to have his ideas explored in detail. The "pros" of Luscombe's method perhaps justify the "cons."

Chapter IV

TAVERN THEATRES

In the sixties there were two places in Toronto where the audience could drink and enjoy theatre at the same time: The Theatre-in-the Dell and the Bohemian Embassy.

Theatre-in-the Dell was located in the Dell Tavern. The owner of the Dell Tavern, Bill de Laurentis, was a musician and his interest in the creative arts resulted in the introduction of several short plays to his captive audience.¹ In 1962, Sylvia Shawn, Ray Lawlor and Joyce Gordon began producing plays at the Dell Tavern. No rental fee was charged to them and they were given the profits from liquor sales as payment for their work. Three Canadian plays were produced by the Shawn-Lawlor-Gordon alliance.

The Door

The Door, by Torontonion Ron Taylor, was presented in June, 1962. It is a one-act play, with two characters. Billy, a drifter, (played by Sean Sullivan) meets Herbie (played by William Brydon) on the street. Herbie offers to share his grimy, run-down tenement room with Billie who has nowhere to sleep. Billie is cold and distant; he

¹Morris Duff, "They Won't Scream For Money," Star, November 6, 1962.

wants to remain uninvolved. Herbie, in contrast, is a warm, communicative and generous person. At the end of the play, Billie attacks the dismayed Herbie who has continued his desperate efforts to communicate.

Herbert Whittaker wrote: "Mr. Taylor . . . has originality of expression and obvious inventiveness. His play is overlong but it reaches rewarding peaks . . ."² Ronald Evans felt The Door was "a startlingly good play" which exhibited "deft characterization."³ There was, according to Evans, "a simple sturdy cohesion about the piece that bespeaks a sound basic dramatic sense and a firm grasp of technique."⁴

The Songwriter

Ron Taylor's second one-act play, The Songwriter, opened on October 11, 1962. The Songwriter is about Larry Payne, a New York songwriter. Payne has had only one success in his twenty year career. He dreams of his past, convinced that his next hit is just around the corner. Payne is an alcoholic, but he convinces himself that his drinking is under control. He has no friends but rationalizes his loneliness and solitude by saying that he doesn't need anyone. The

² Herbert Whittaker, "New Theatre Features Drinks With the Drama," Globe, June 13, 1962.

³ Ronald Evans, Telegram, June 12, 1962.

⁴ Ibid.

truth of his life is that he is a very lonely, aging alcoholic. The play opens with Payne preparing for bed. He begins to undress, then notices the audience and quickly puts his clothes back on. Throughout the play, Payne monologues about his life. In the end, he is nearer to the realization that his life has been wasted. The play closes with Payne "ironically whimpering a line from his latest lyric ' . . . at last I've found my dream.'" ⁵

Larry Reynolds played the songwriter, a character, according to Ralph Thomas, for whom Ron Taylor "has drawn upon every technique within his power to make . . . last as a credible being for three quarters of an hour." ⁶ Larry Reynolds portrayed Payne's "subtly stated weaknesses of character with clarity" which made The Songwriter's "sentimental ending, believable." ⁷ Thomas wrote:

Taylor is much concerned with making us squirm and relate to what is happening on stage as he is with the dramatic situation. And he carries it off with assuredness, precision and at times, brilliance. ⁸

In The Door Taylor seemed influenced by the Theatre of the Absurd "taking a crack at working with two well known, one might even say cliché, characters and seeing what he could do with them." ⁹ Taylor's

⁵ Ronald Evans, Telegram, October 12, 1962.

⁶ Ralph Thomas, "Theatre-in-the Dell," Star, October 12, 1962.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

experimentation as a playwright was "with very sure and measured steps" which proved that at 32 (in 1962) he was "a very talented young man."¹⁰

As a character, wrote Ronald Evans, Larry Payne was

. . . not as sound or as sturdy a character as Billie, the vicious paranoic of Mr. Taylor's first play The Door. But he is palpably real and recognizable, frail, futile and affecting, a man like Willie Loman, to whom 'attention must be paid.'¹¹

Herbert Whittaker wrote that Larry Reynolds "deserved admiration," but that the playwright had "taken too long to reveal some fairly simple truths . . . the total effect suggests the rewrite of a 1930 movie."¹²

Point of Transfer

Point of Transfer, by A.W. Purdy, was produced at the Dell Tavern in July, 1962. The play is a one-act comedy about a husband who goes to a brothel and finds that he is two dollars short of payment. He telephones his wife and asks her to bring the money to him. The husband doesn't tell his wife why he needs the money; she is to leave it and return home immediately. The wife arrives and by mistake wanders upstairs to the bedrooms. She meets the prostitute and the two women

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Evans, October 12, 1962, op. cit.

¹²Herbert Whittaker, "Play Suggests Movie of 1930," Globe, October 13, 1962.

exchange ideas. The wife decides she wants excitement; the prostitute decides she wants security. The women exchange places and the husband takes the prostitute home with him. The husband, an underwear salesman, was played by James Douglas; the wife was played by Dawn Greenhalgh and the prostitute by Aileen Seaton. Jack Crawford also had a small part in the production.

A.W. Purdy is well known for his poetry and for his work as co-editor of Poetry magazine.

Ronald Evans, in his review, described Point of Transfer as "a droll caper around the fingers of absurdity."¹³ Wendy Michener, in the Star, said: "His comedy is skillfully dramatised anecdote about an exchange of roles . . . Everyone is happy except the buffeted husband, who meekly goes home with the substitute wife to catch up on his sleep."¹⁴ Herbert Whittaker saw the play as "an amusing bit of shop logic . . . Broad and funny is what he is after, and broad and funny is what they gave him."¹⁵

The sets for Point of Transfer were minimal. The play was produced as one of two plays on the evening bill. The second play was Three with Dorothy Parker, by Dorothy Parker. Comparing the two plays Whittaker said: "Mr. Purdy cannot, on my say so, claim to be wittier than Dorothy Parker, but he can claim that once, down in the Dell, he

¹³ Ronald Evans, "The Men Never Have a Chance," Telegram, July 14, 1962.

¹⁴ Wendy Michener, "Theatre-in-the Dell," Star, July 11, 1962.

¹⁵ Herbert Whittaker, "Purdy's Play Outpoints Parker," Globe, July 12, 1962.

was funnier."¹⁶

The Bohemian Embassy, Toronto's second tavern theatre was located in a Saint Nicholas Street loft. Don Cullen opened the Bohemian Embassy in 1960, in partnership with Peter Oomen. In the next six years a variety of poetry readings, chamber concerts, art shows, happenings, plays and revues were produced. The well-known series "Village Revue" resulted from an attempt by Barrie Baldaro, a friend of Cullen's, to provide better entertainment for the Bohemian Embassy.¹⁷ The Embassy closed in 1966.

Private Club and A Household God

Several one-act Canadian plays were produced between 1962 and 1966. In 1962, two early plays by John Herbert, Private Club and A Household God were staged. John Herbert also directed these plays. They were not reviewed and do not seem to have been produced again in Toronto. No further information is available regarding their production.

A Ring for Flori

In 1963, A Ring for Flori, by David French, and David, by Eve Law, were produced as a double-bill. They began a week's run on

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Nathan Cohen, "Village Revue saw-offs: On to bigger, better things," Star, June 10, 1967.

December 2, 1963. Eddie and Flori are the two main characters in A Ring for Flori. They live together but the arrangement suits neither of them. Flori wants to settle down permanently and marry Eddie; Eddie on the other hand, has a roving eye and isn't ready for marriage. The conflict of the play arises from this basic situation. Raymond Bellow played Eddie, Cicile Oliver played Flori. The director of the play was Barry Lavender.

Barry Hale found the playwright David French ". . . unable to make the conflict into theatre. Once he (the playwright) has stated these simple things about his characters he is unable to go further."¹⁸

David

David, by Eve Law, was originally a television play. Miss Law, a comedienne cum playwright, played the lead role of Zelda, a middle-aged woman recently divorced. Zelda is tired of "the just plain awfulness of most people."¹⁹ Her empty-headed roommate, and David, the roommate's boyfriend, provide the conflict of the play. Bob Koons played David; the roommate was played by Janise Oliver. The play was directed by Robert Galbraith.

Hale wrote that both plays were "about love. Or rather I'm afraid, they are about LOVE, with all the shallow, ill-considered metaphors you might imagine."²⁰ The double-bill provided "too few

¹⁸ Barry Hale, "Love is Ladled On," Telegram, December 8, 1963.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

rewarding moments to keep love alive at the Embassy this week."²¹

The Barber, The Armoured Butterflies and Four Dialogues to Death

Three one-act plays by Michael John Nimchuck ran for five days at the Bohemian Embassy, from February 15 to 19, 1966. The Barber, a play about a conservative Englishman who goes to have his hair cut by a talkative Italian, was directed by Sean Mulcahy. The two men argue about race, national achievement and a variety of other topics with cliché-ringing conviction. Guy Sanvido played the barber, Michael Snow the Englishman.

The second play The Armoured Butterflies, directed by Peter Peer, is about a young woman (Lucy Warner) jaundiced by her first unhappy love-affair. She is presently involved with a "Lothario" (Michael Snow) who uses each love-affair he has as an attempt to recapture the beauty of his first affair.

In the third play Four Dialogues to Death, Nimchuck portrays the story of a Canadian soldier killed in Korea. Using a series of four flashbacks, Nimchuck traces the soldier's history, beginning at the time the soldier tells his girlfriend of his enlistment and ending with his death.

Nathan Cohen, in the sole review of the three plays, wrote that the playwright was quite successful with The Barber and The Armoured Butterflies. Cohen objected to the gimmick ending of The Barber which

²¹Ibid.

destroyed the "effectiveness of everything that has preceded it."²²

In The Armoured Butterflies, Nathan Cohen was disconcerted by the discovery "that their [the characters] subsequent banalities are meant to be taken seriously."²³ In the third play, Four Dialogues to Death:

Mr. Nimchuck goes entirely astray . . . The play misfires in all directions: the flashback method is purposeless; there is no true characterization -- the boy, in particular is [a] whining and egotistical fellow with no consideration for anyone but himself; there is no sense of inevitability or emotional progression in the scenes recalled; and the language is altogether lifeless, most particularly when it strives to be poetic or eloquent or both.²⁴

The author's concept, in Four Dialogues to Death, showed potential

. . . But since he (Nimchuck) does not put that idea to imaginative use, all we are left with is the shadow of that idea, and regret that it did not materialize into a dramatic statement.²⁵

The Theatre-in-the Dell, and The Bohemian Embassy provided alternate environments for the productions of shorter plays in Toronto, with the added audience incentive of liquor in the theatre. Plays presented in the tavern theatres were invariably well-attended.

²² Nathan Cohen, "It's a record season for Canadian plays," Star, February 19, 1966.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Chapter V

THE VILLAGE PLAYHOUSE

The Village Playhouse opened in 1961 under the management of Donald Meyers and Elspeth Gaylor. From 1961, until the theatre closed in 1963, they produced over thirty plays. The theatre used for these productions was located at 49 Laplante Avenue, and seated eighty people. Each play ran for three to four weeks.

The Master Mind and Who is on my side? Who?

In 1963, the Village Playhouse produced two one-act plays by Canadian Martin Lager. These were: The Master Mind and Who is on my side? Who? The plays ran from April 5 to 20.

In The Master Mind, a pair of criminals Pizzi and Vincenzo, are on the run from the police after being involved in an unemployment insurance swindle. They hide in a garage and Vincenzo devises a money-making scheme. He sends Pizzi out to bring back an innocent girl to prostitute. Pizzi returns with a baby. Vincenzo goes out to finish the job properly. He brings back Clara who is beautiful, innocent and kind. Pizzi's 'guardian angel', a "Little Girl," works on his conscience. Pizzi refuses to allow Clara to prostitute herself because he loves her.

The Master Mind was directed by Vernon Chapman, and designed by Tony Van Tulleken. The play takes place "in a storeroom over a garage." Vincenzo Grossetrommel, Pizzi, "Little Girl" and Clara were played by Joel Kenyon, Bruce Dellar, Rena Jackson and Milo Ringham, respectively.

The second one-act Who is on my side? Who? is a semi-autobiographical play about the life and hardships of an artist. The artist, played by Joseph Liberatoire, travels through his life in a hostile society, from birth to death. The play used mime, dialogue, verse, prose, dance and pageantry. The title is taken from a Biblical reference, Kings 9:32: "And he lifted up his face to the window, and he said, 'Who is on my side? Who?' and there looked out to him two or three eunuchs."

Who is on my side? Who? was first produced at the Manitoba Theatre Centre's studio theatre, in Winnipeg in 1962. The artist is called Everyman; other characters in the play are The Military Man, The Foreman, First and Second Cowboys, Rock 'n' Roll Singer, etc. Who is on my side? Who? required sixteen actors to play thirty-two parts. The actors were: Paul Welsh, Denise Ferguson, Jo Acornley, Joel Kenyon, Milo Ringham, Bob Hightower, Len Doncheff, Marvin Goldhar, Bruce Dellar, Bill Mockeridge, Bruce Armstrong, Rena Jackson, Linda Hunt, Mai Walker and Mary Black. Who is on my side? Who? was also directed by Vernon Chapman, and the set was designed by Elspeth Gaylor and Donald Meyers. Meyers also designed the lighting and Miss Gaylor the sound.

Ronald Evans described both of the plays as "pretty bad."¹

He felt that Martin Lager did not write about real people in Who is on my side? Who? but had created "cardboard monsters."² The total effect of Who is on my side? Who?, according to Evans, was "terribly intense, satirical, symbolic and frankly, boring."³ The Master Mind, written after Who is on my side? Who?, showed more promise. In The Master Mind Lager "has stopped belabouring his parents, his schoolteachers, social workers, the army, big business, the church and the Rotary Club for all the dirt they did him."⁴ The characters in The Master Mind were more believable, and the plot was more concrete. Evans believed that Lager's two one-acts would be financial failures, yet he approved of their production by the Village Playhouse: "Young playwrights, like young boxers, have to make their worst mistakes in public and get punished for them. It's really the only way to learn."⁵

Dorothy Mikos called Who is on my side? Who?:

. . . a dreary sequence of action and ideas more than faintly reminiscent of other, better plays. The climax comes as the cast swirled around our hero, who cringes on the floor, chanting with steadily increasing intensity: "Thou shalt

¹Ronald Evans, Telegram, April 8, 1963.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

not . . . thou shalt not . . . thou shalt not . . .
LOVE."⁶

Ralph Hicklin found both of the plays "workable" but pointed out the difference between "workable" and "promising."⁷ He suggested that Martin Lager needed to learn the value of economy and omission, although

. . . Complexities considered, the play comes off well, though the text itself is occasionally pretentious and unfocused. Vernon Chapman, whose direction of The Master Mind is taut and effective, hasn't been able to repeat the tautness.⁸

The Village Playhouse disbanded for a number of reasons. The theatre at 49 Laplante Avenue was not large enough to be economically feasible. In a week, given a full house with standing room only, the theatre could only accommodate seven hundred people.⁹ There was no way to make up for losses if a play was a failure. To find and remodel a suitable building would require \$10,000 and Mr. Meyers and Miss Gaylor did not have the money to invest.¹⁰

Meyers said:

⁶Dorothy Mikos, Star, April 6, 1963.

⁷Ralph Hicklin, Globe, April 6, 1963.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Gordon Froggatt, "Final Night for Village Theatre," Globe, January 22, 1963.

¹⁰Ronald Evans, Telegram, June 1, 1963.

Of course we feel sad about closing, but despite the fact that many people thought we were wrong to battle against what seemed at times to be overwhelming odds, we feel that we have accomplished what we set out to do -- prove that the new and untried will be accepted in Toronto. As far as we are concerned, the past two years have been well spent.¹¹

Miss Gaylor said: "Rather than reduce our standards we're stopping here."¹²

¹¹Nathan Cohen, "Village Playhouse Calls It Quits," Star, May 27, 1963.

¹²Herbert Whittaker, "Not Quitting," Globe, June 5, 1963.

Chapter VI

ARIES PRODUCTIONS

Aries Productions began in 1964, organized by a group of young actors: David Baron, Bruce Gray, Morna Wales, Norma Clark and Paisley Maxwell. During the first two years, the company managed to break even financially and was able to provide salaries for its actors. It presented its plays in the one hundred seat Poor Alex Theatre "using Crippled Civilians furniture and so on."¹ The group "packed the Poor Alex and earned the professional company critical praise."² In 1966, when the Crest and the Canadian Players closed, Aries Productions became more important to Toronto theatre. It received grants of \$4,000 from The Ontario Council and \$3,000 from the Laidlaw Foundation, as well as an anonymous donation of \$1,000 from a Toronto businessman. In 1967, friends contributed \$2,000, and Metropolitan Toronto and the province of Ontario matched this sum. In addition, the Canada Council granted Aries \$8,500 for the production of a Canadian play. In 1967, the company decided to rent the Central Library Theatre for a January to April season of four shows. A three-week run for each play was planned.

¹Betty Lee, "Theatre: tried, trad and tribal," Globe Magazine, February 21, 1970, pp.4-7.

²Ibid.

Bruce Gray said:

We were pretty ambitious. We decided the whole season had to be Very Important because of Centennial. We tried to get plays such as John Herbert's Fortune and Men's Eyes as our Canadian production, plus some other big hits from New York. But Herbert didn't want his play done then and the best things from Broadway were unavailable until they had been tried on the tour circuit.³

A Capful of Pennies

The group decided on John Coulter's play A Capful of Pennies as their Canadian production. Problems arose almost immediately: internal disagreements, lack of communication within the company, and low audience attendance.⁴ The group's original capital of \$17,500 was quickly spent on rights and other expenses. A subscription campaign raised one hundred subscribers, yet the company still needed between \$10,000 and \$15,000 to carry on. A change in Equity regulations in 1966 raised the required minimum salary for actors. Equity required all theatres to pay actors \$50 a week for rehearsals and for the run of the play. Small professional and semi-professional companies had previously been allowed to pay actors \$15 a week for rehearsals, and \$35 a week for the run of the play. Thus, Aries could survive on a small budget, have three weeks of rehearsal and still make enough money

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

to break even.⁵ The new Equity regulation increased pre-production costs from \$1,047 to \$1,677 per week and Aries' total salary outlay from \$270 to \$900 per week.⁶ If the Poor Alex, where Aries originally worked, ran to near-capacity audiences, Aries could have survived under the new pay regulation. This was highly improbable and the move to the Toronto Central Library theatre was an attempt to remedy this situation. However, Aries soon came to realize that even if the Central Library theatre should be sold out for every performance, the company would still not make enough money to stay in the black. In spite of this, Aries proceeded with their plans for the 1967 season.

John Coulter, the author of A Capful of Pennies moved from Ireland to Canada in the 1940's. Between 1940 and 1950, three Coulter plays, Holy Manhattan, The House in the Quiet Glen and The Drums Are Out were produced by the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto. Mr. Oblomoff, another play by John Coulter was produced by the Belfast Group Theatre, the Bristol Old Vic, and as a radio program on the BBC, Radio Eireann and Australian radio before being produced by the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto in 1959. In the 1960's, Deidre, and Sleep, My Pretty One were presented in Toronto by various groups and companies, none professional.

A Capful of Pennies opened at the Toronto Central Library Theatre on March 22, 1967, and ran until April 15. The first

⁵ Ronald Evans, "Aries Faces Extinction," Telegram, May 26, 1966.

⁶ Ibid.

performance of the play was given as a benefit for the Saint Lawrence Centre for the Performing Arts. The play is about the nineteenth century actor Edmund Kean's early years of touring the provinces, his spectacular debut at Drury Lane in 1814 as Shylock, in The Merchant of Venice, his subsequent rise to fame, his uneasy relationship with the royalty and his numerous extra-marital affairs. At the close of the play Kean is preparing to leave on his first American tour. A Capful of Pennies is more about Kean as a man than Kean as an actor. The scenes which show Kean's acting style are of secondary importance to the incidents in his life.

The cast consisted of twelve actors with considerable doubling of roles. Sean Mulcahy played Edmund Kean. Other actors were Claude Bede, Patrick Boxill, Jane Casson, Charles Hayter, Nancy Kerr, Robert Marsh, Margaret Macleod, Dennis Thatcher, Morna Wales, Lyn Wright and Elizabeth Walsh.

James Cunningham directed A Capful of Pennies, Janet MacGregor Smith designed the set, and Morna Wales designed the costumes. There were numerous set and costume changes in the three act play.

Nathan Cohen wrote :

Since Mr. Coulter takes pains not to show us Kean as an actor, we are asked to accept his greatness on faith. But he is really pushing our trust too far when he asks us to go along with the most arbitrary and pointless changes in character and plot progress.⁷

The critic added:

⁷Nathan Cohen, "Capful of Pennies: It's impossible to create substance in a vacuum," Star, March 25, 1967.

It may be argued that Mr. Coulter's formlessness is intentional. He is not attempting to connect the various phases of Kean's character into an organic whole. He wants us to see the various odds and ends, and leave it to us to fit them into place. But the simple fact is that Mr. Coulter fails to dramatize most of the tensions in the play.⁸

Kean's notorious treatment of royalty, for example, added up to nothing more than his snubbing one royal couple.⁹ This did not seem to be an adequate reason for the furor of dislike which Kean created. Cohen complimented Sean Mulcahy who:

. . . performs audacious and heroic feats. He is one of our best actors, and serves [as] a magnet for a great many unformulated plot and character elements . . . however, it is impossible to create in a vacuum and Mr. Mulcahy goes down in defeat. He gets his best support from Miss Macleod, in a very poorly written part, and Mr. Boxill.¹⁰

Cunningham, the director, "fails entirely to capture the mood of the period, either in the theatres, drawing room, alleys or pub scenes . . . The approach is plainly sincere, and just as plainly a botch."¹¹

A Capful of Pennies began well, for Ronald Evans, with a reference to the fact that Kean's bastardy compelled him to prove himself as a great actor.¹² This promising psychological insight was

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ronald Evans, "Epic of a baffling bantam," Telegram, March 23, 1967.

abandoned, however, and

. . . later it all boils down [to] a vague love-hate affair with society and show-busy Irving Berlin inanities of the let's-go-out-there-and give 'em-hell-gang variety.¹³

Sean Mulcahy played Kean "with what seems an agonizing awareness of occasion."¹⁴ The direction

. . . does keep the action nicely fluid, . . . never yielding to the temptation to set up tableaux vivant, and his tavern and street scenes are particularly warm and living with all the clutching and grunting.¹⁵

Nevertheless, Evans felt the play needed cutting and a more controlled pace.¹⁶

To Herbert Whittaker, it seemed as if John Coulter had used Kean's life as a starting point from which to explore the character of all actors.¹⁷ Mulcahy, as Kean, was:

. . . thoughtful, avoiding the sin of ranting, probing, delicate, using the attitude sparingly. It is not the Kean of legend, but it is very likely the Kean Coulter drew.¹⁸

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Herbert Whittaker, "Mulcahy Evokes a Fascinating Era," Globe, March 25, 1967.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Mulcahy "soberly tackled the impossible," the rest of the players were "sketchily-aimed" and served little purpose other than to provide Mulcahy with his cues and the impetus for his angers.¹⁹ The director, James Cunningham, "recognized the play as gentle pastiche . . . and so spun it out with musical interludes. His production was tasteful, economical and interminable."²⁰

Discussing the relative success of the plays which Aries produced at the Toronto Central Library theatre, Bruce Gray commented: "Tchin-Tchin (a French play) didn't get the audience, Right Honorable did well. But Capful was a Canadian play and we sometimes got only twenty-one people a night."²¹ Odetta, the folksinger, was tentatively booked to star in Aries' last play In White America but she cancelled because of a previous engagement. Aries was then forced to decide whether or not to produce In White America without a well-known actress. The company decided against it, wrote to their subscribers, cancelled the play and ended their career. In March 1967, after selling their theatre equipment, Aries was still more than \$2,000 in debt.²² In the fall of 1967, however, they decided to try again and asked the Canada Council for another grant. This was refused.

In an ironic interview in 1967, Morna Wales said:

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lee, op. cit.

²² Ibid.

There's plenty of room for more professional theatre. There can't just be one professional company. It wouldn't employ enough of our actors, and they'd all move away. This way there can be a lot of interaction, a kind of cross-pollination that will help us raise the standards even higher. What happened with the Crest and Canadian Players was tragic, . . . But maybe it was a blessing in disguise.²³

Aries Productions closed because there was no option available in Canadian theatre in the Sixties for experimentation, or for half-empty houses. The financial obstacles always existed, and without grants, were almost impossible to surmount.

²³Antony Ferry, "This is our new off-Broadway," Star, January 7, 1967.

Chapter VII

THEATRE PASSE MURAILLE

Theatre Passe Muraille began at Rochdale College in 1968. The company -- Jim Garrard, director, Ron Terrill, manager, Frank Masi, designer, and Judith Masi, acting consultant -- hoped to work with the eight hundred and fifty residents of Rochdale College. This goal became too difficult to implement and in May, 1969, the company moved from Rochdale College to the theatre Eleven Trinity Square. Eleven Trinity Square accommodated an audience of between one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty. By February, 1970, the company consisted of thirteen members, of whom nine were actors and four were administrative or directorial staff.

The purpose of Theatre Passe Muraille was:

. . . an exploration of theatre's function in society. We do not intend to build another stage for actors or to provide more seats for audiences. Any existing theatre building in Toronto provides stages and seats.

Theatre Passe Muraille provides an event -- a human event. We offer theatre of content and experience -- contact between actors working together as a continuing ensemble and contact between actors and people of the community in the form of performances . . .

Theatre Passe Muraille can only be loosely translated, 'Theatre which passes through Great Walls'. Our theatre is free from the distinctions between actor and spectator, between 'inside' and 'outside' the theatre, and between drama, music and dance as separate art forms. Theatre

Passe Muraille passes through the barriers of
preconception . . .¹

Memories of My Brother

Memories of My Brother, by John Palmer, was chosen to debut Theatre Passe Muraille at Eleven Trinity Square. The playwright was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia. He began writing plays in high school. In 1965, Palmer won first prize at the Canadian University Drama League competition for Visions of an Unseemly Youth. By 1966, Murder in Blue, After the Apple, A Darkling Plane, I'm Going to Pin a Medal on the Girl I Left Behind and The Principle of the Thing, all original plays by Palmer, were produced by various non-professional groups. In 1968, Palmer worked at the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow, Scotland as part of the "Canadian Directors in Britain" scheme. In the late Sixties, his one-act "black comedy" Confessions of a Necrophile was produced at the University of Guelph and at Acadia University.

Memories of My Brother was first produced at Stratford, Ontario in the summer of 1969. In the fall, under the directorship of the playwright, the play moved to Eleven Trinity Square. The play was made up of three acts, with a total of seventeen scenes, a prologue and an epilogue.

Palmer described his play as a "collage"

¹Theatre Passe Muraille publicity release, February, 1968, pp.1-2.

. . . drawn from a lot of personal experience and some impersonal. I write about my friends, people I know, ² so most of Memories of My Brother is based on reality.

Martin Kinch designed the set for Memories of My Brother.

Platforms, pipes and ladders were used to create a gymnasium-like effect. The costumes -- gym suits for the actresses, and gym shorts for the actors -- were designed by Danny Freedman in keeping with the set. Lighting was by Mike Reynolds.

Nathan Cohen disliked Palmer's play and called it a poor choice for Theatre Passe Muraille's first production in their new building. Palmer's "revue," wrote Cohen, dealt with homosexuality, heterosexuality, bestiality, censorship, nudity, war, hypocrisy, alienation and permissiveness:

But the writing, though fat with ambition, is skeleton-thin in technique. When it is serious, as it is most of the time, its quality is invisible. And when it means to be funny, Palmer is patently a novice editor of his work.³

Palmer was "too much of a novice" to direct a successful version of the play. A more experienced director might have avoided the pitfalls which made the production "plodding and dreary."⁴ Cohen praised three scenes: "Confederation," "Mona and Sam Do Their Thing," and "Underground."

²Globe, November 3, 1969.

³Nathan Cohen, "Muraille chooses badly for opener," Star, November 6, 1969.

⁴Ibid.

Herbert Whittaker called the play "the best revue in town. As a play it can mean anything or nothing; as a revue it adds up to Palmer's personal view of the world."⁵ Palmer, as a playwright, was sensitive, poetic and entertaining "although not always at the same time."⁶ Contradicting Nathan Cohen, Whittaker considered Palmer "experienced enough a director to avoid all the pitfalls of handling his own work, except that of length."⁷ Whittaker enjoyed "Fascism I," a scene about the Canadian police force, as well as "Salon" and "Alan's Room," two scenes about love.

Richard Murphet, in Varsity, found the acting occasionally inept, the directing loose, and the play, in general, over-written. He did, however, admire the "intense force" of the play and found it "concentrated, complex, yet simple to respond to."⁸ Although this quality made the fragmentation and lack of structure of the play

. . . irrelevant . . . it is a warm-up for his career as a writer and director (with emphasis definitely off the latter). There is enough good material in Memories of My Brother for the show to stand on its own feet (or scaffolding).⁹

⁵ Herbert Whittaker, "Nude memories swing about jungle gym," Globe, November 6, 1969.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. It is interesting to note that both Nathan Cohen and Herbert Whittaker attended the same performance of Memories of My Brother.

⁸ Richard Murphet, "Memories show promise," Varsity, November 14, 1969.

⁹ Ibid.

Both Murphet and Cohen commented on the sparse audience attendance. The evening Cohen saw the play there were only thirty five people in the theatre. Murphet, who pointed out that the audience seemed uncomfortable because of the intimate relationship between actor and audience, commented that "What it (the play) really lacks is an audience."¹⁰

Martin Kinch, the young Artistic Director for the company, was asked about the difficulties encountered in keeping an experimental company alive in Toronto. The task he said was:

Bloody tough. We walk a daily tightrope. It's difficult to plan ahead. Because we have to mount back-to-back productions and keep open night after night to bring in box-office revenue, the work is killing. Actually we don't mind the work itself. It's just that we find ourselves on a constant treadmill without any time to research, learn or develop.¹¹

The budget for the company, in 1969, was \$50,000; a budget of \$100,000 would have been more adequate.¹² The weekly box-office potential of the theatre at Eleven Trinity Square is \$2,500, but this is more in theory than in fact. The average box-office take per week, in the winter of 1970, was \$1,200.¹³ Advertising costs were between

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹"One Theatre walking a financial tightrope," Globe, February 28, 1970.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

\$60 and \$200 per week. The rent, per year, for the theatre was \$6,000.¹⁴

In the 1968 to 1969 season the company was \$4,000 in debt and was refused a Canada Council grant because of a grant freeze policy.¹⁵

In spite of monies received from Rochdale College, the Province of Ontario Council for the Arts, sympathetic friends and patron members of the theatre, the company was forced to close temporarily.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

Chapter VIII

HIGH BUDGET PRODUCTIONS AT THE ROYAL ALEX

The Royal Alexandra Theatre, popularly called the Royal Alex, was built in 1907, and is Toronto's oldest playhouse. "The Grand Old Lady of King Street" is traditional in style: balconies, boxes, red plush carpeting and chandeliers adorn her interior. The building was constructed on a cantilever basis, with no poles or pillars to obstruct the view from any seat in the house.

In 1963, the city of Toronto planned to tear the theatre down and redevelop the lot for offices or a parking area. The Royal Alex was opportunely saved from extinction by "Honest Ed" Mirvish, a Toronto businessman. Mirvish bought the building and lot from the city for \$215,000. He then completely renovated and outfitted it, transferring the old furnishings to his "Poor Alex" theatre on Brunswick Avenue. The lobby and checkroom facilities of the Royal Alex were enlarged, additional washrooms were installed, a missing central chandelier was replaced, and proper lighting was added. A general cleanup and paint-work completed the overhaul.

The renovated theatre opened in the fall of 1963. During the first two seasons imported productions played at the Royal Alex. Mirvish then created his own company for the 1965 to 1966 season, and

with the help of producers Michael McAloney and Joyce Sloan, director Charles Tate, designer Peter Wingate, and choreographer Vivian Ainslie, five musicals and one straight comedy were produced. The lone comedy was Eric Nicol's Vancouver success Like Father, Like Fun.

Like Father, Like Fun

Like Father, Like Fun played to packed houses at the Playhouse in Vancouver from March 24 to April 9, 1966 and so impressed Mirvish that he paid \$25,000 to bring the comedy to the Royal Alex in Toronto.

In return for the rights to Like Father, Like Fun Mirvish agreed to give the play sixty-four straight performances at the Royal Alex, or, alternately, one night on Broadway. Mirvish rented the Cort Theatre in New York from Shubert Theatres and paid a \$12,000 deposit. After a month's run in Toronto, Nicol's play was to open at the Cort Theatre on September 8, 1966.

Like Father, Like Fun accumulated \$9,000 a week in running costs. If the play ran to capacity at the Cort Theatre, Mirvish would gross \$44,000 a week. In a three to four month run at the Cort Theatre, Mirvish hoped to recoup the \$100,000 he had invested in Nicol's play.

Eric Nicol was born in Kingston, Ontario and was awarded a B.A. from the University of British Columbia in 1941. He spent three years in the Air Force before returning to university to finish his M.A. and teach. Nicol spent one year at the Sorbonne, then lived in London, England and wrote for BBC radio and television. In 1951, he returned

to Vancouver as a columnist for The Province. Nicol was the author of thirteen books and three stage plays, and a three time winner of the Leacock Medal for Humour.

Like Father, Like Fun is a comedy about a rich lumber baron whose son is a mild-mannered, serious boy of eighteen. The son is engaged to his childhood sweetheart. The father decides to introduce his son to an older, experienced woman who will show the boy some of the more exciting aspects of life. The father's Public Relations man, a recent divorcé, proposes to his new girlfriend, an artist, that she take on the job. The artist agrees to seduce the boy if the father will arrange a show for her at the Art Gallery. The arrangement is settled; the artist comes to stay for the weekend. The father, in the meantime, has set up a hidden television camera in the boy's bedroom so that he can follow his son's progress and guarantee that the artist will fulfill her part of their bargain. At the crucial moment, however, the television camera explodes. This is the end of the first act. In the second act, the father has reneged on his agreement with the artist. To revenge herself, the woman tightens her hold on the son who turns to beads and bell-bottoms, much to the father's dismay. In the final scene of the play the son catches his father making a pass at the artist and announces in disgust that he is leaving for Communist China.

Like Father, Like Fun starred Ed McNamara, Roy Shuman, Doris Buckingham, Reid Anderson, Patricia Gage and Sylvia Feigel. The director was Malcolm Black; the set designer was Leo B. Meyer; costumes were by John Fenney; and Richard B. Shiele was the stage manager.

Stephen Franklin, of the Montreal Star, wrote that Like Father, Like Fun "appears to have all the basic ingredients for commercial success on the New York stage."¹

This statement was qualified with:

That is to say it is broad in its humor, it is pleasantly vulgar and it makes its observations upon the contemporary human condition against a conventional backdrop of clichés. It is a situation in which ordinary middle-class North Americans can feel comfortably at home.²

Franklin added:

It has the considerable advantage of not being the slightest bit elevating, not being self-consciously Canadian, not even being noticeably Canadian at all, in fact. Eric Nicol exercises his wit, in other words, in a fairly shallow pool in which there is no danger of anyone drowning and the filter system is not clogged with wet maple leaves.³

Ronald Evans wrote that Eric Nicol was a skilled writer who knew how to write quips and puns ". . . but as a dramatist, he lacks something. Something being the skill to sustain one good gag for two and a half hours."⁴ Evans suggested the second act was too long and needed rewriting. The play ran approximately two hours and thirty-five minutes.

¹Stephen Franklin, "Keep Your Fingers Crossed for Nicol and Mirvish," Montreal Star, July 23, 1966.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ronald Evans, "The second act needs doctoring," Telegram, July 15, 1966.

Herbert Whittaker wrote that Like Father, Like Fun encouraged "all those old hopes for the Canadian playwright."⁵ The play showed "a lot of promise; in a disarmingly modest way . . . quite a funny, randy farce, a rare commodity these days."⁶ Whittaker agreed with Ronald Evans that Like Father, Like Fun needed cutting and a livelier pace.⁷ Nicol's best work, according to Whittaker, was as a satirist of contemporary Canadian values:

In fact where Like Father, Like Fun settles down to make fun out of Canadian life, it shows its greatest promise, for a genuine satirist is welcome in our theatre. But Nicol has to live down his reputation as a funnyman first, and sacrifice some of the gags. Many of them.⁸

Nathan Cohen called Like Father, Like Fun the Royal Alexandra's worst production since the end of World War II.⁹ In Cohen's opinion, Nicol had taken four scenes to establish what could have been accomplished in two scenes, his use of a second set was superfluous, the characters were poorly developed and out of control, the jokes were tasteless, the plot line dull and unimaginative, the pace was slow, and the sets were inadequate.¹⁰

⁵ Herbert Whittaker, "Pruning would improve the humor of Like Father," Globe, July 15, 1966.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Nathan Cohen, "'Like Father': Royal Alex's worst since the end of World War II," Star, July 15, 1966.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The comedy opened on July 14, 1966 and played to approximately ninety percent capacity.¹¹ More advance tickets were sold for the Toronto opening night performance than were sold for the opening nights of many major American imports.¹² Mirvish, who still planned to send the play to New York was asked: "How does it feel to be taking a Canadian play to Broadway?" He answered:

We are not taking Like Father, Like Fun to Broadway just to be chauvinistic. Just being a Canadian play is not enough. We are taking this play to Broadway because it is a very funny play. It has a cast we are proud of. It is happily written by one of the finest writers of humor in Canada, and I feel there are a lot of people in it who deserve wider recognition and we have finally found a vehicle that can bring this recognition to them. But it would be a disservice to everyone connected with Like Father, Like Fun if all the production had to offer was the fact that it is Canadian I am doing this play, and spending that kind of money, not only because I believe in the qualities and humor of Like Father, Like Fun but because a lot of people in both Canada and New York are convinced that it is a play that merits the kind of attention we hope to see it get.¹³

Mirvish extended the 1966 run of Like Father, Like Fun at the Royal Alex so that further revisions could be made in the script. The play then traveled to Montreal's Gesu Theatre for a run from August 25 to September 11, 1966. After the Montreal debut, Like Father, Like Fun dropped out of circulation and plans for the New York opening were

¹¹Herbert Whittaker, Globe, 1966.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Royal Alexandra Theatre Bulletin, July 14-July 30, 1966.

abandoned.

In July 1967, however, Like Father, Like Fun reappeared in Toronto, under the new title Please Do Not Adjust Your Son. Mirvish had arranged for a two-week run at the Royal Alex as a prelude to Please Do Not Adjust Your Son's opening in New York. The revised play was directed by Henry Kaplan, who had worked with Eric Nicol on script alterations. The play finally opened in New York, at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre on October 6, 1967 under the title A Minor Adjustment. The play closed on October 7, 1967. The misadventures of Nicol's play on Broadway are described by the playwright in his book A Scar is Born.¹⁴

"Honest Ed" Mirvish was asked if his experience with Nicol's play had dampened his desire to produce Canadian plays. Mirvish answered:

Oh no. From our point of view, economically and for prestige, we see a good many advantages to doing new shows. We have been flooded with scripts, and are considering a number of other plays in partnership and on our own.¹⁵

Unfortunately, Mirvish's first attempts as a producer of a Canadian play was unsuccessful. His determined efforts, however, must be viewed with admiration.

¹⁴ A Scar is Born was published by the Ryerson Press (c 1968).

¹⁵ Nathan Cohen, "Nobody seems to know the future of 'Like Father'," Star, September 12, 1966.

Chapter IX

LOW BUDGET PRODUCTIONS AT THE POOR ALEX

The Poor Alex is a one hundred seat theatre run by "Honest Ed" Mirvish. It is situated at 296 Brunswick Avenue, in a warehouse space which Mirvish cleared on the ground floor of his plastics factory. Old furnishings from the redecorated Royal Alex helped renovate the Poor Alex. A low rental fee of \$20 a night, made it possible for amateur, semi-professional and small professional companies to produce plays at the Poor Alex at a reasonably low overhead.

Nine non-professional and nine professional productions of Canadian plays were staged at the Poor Alex in the Sixties.

Where in Hell Does He Go From Here?

The first professional, non-musical Canadian play produced at the Poor Alex in the Sixties was Where in Hell Does He Go From Here? This play, by Alan Pearce, was written for Equity Showcase Theatre Incorporated. It was directed by Sydney S. Brown and staged from April 21 to 26, 1964. The cast included: Paul Soles, Art Jenoff, William Osler, Barbara Cummings, Eric Kosky, Melanie Morse, Graydon Gould, Terence Ross and Anthony Brown. Very little information is available about this play, and this generally applies to all the productions at

the Poor Alex. The nature of the theatre -- low-budget, non-professional, semi-professional and professional -- did not attract publicity. Only the occasional article or review is available; sometimes program notes or a media reference are the only sources of information.

The End of Summer

The End of Summer, by Audre Monture, was presented at the Poor Alex by the Saint Louis Theatre Company from Pointe Claire, Montreal, in the Spring of 1965. The playwright also directed her play. The set design was by Dan Delaney; costume supervisor was Mary Woodhouse; lighting designers were Tony Holtum and John Kees. Music and voice were written and arranged by Mona Pitt. The full length play had a cast of eleven.

Three From the Asylum

In 1965, the Toronto Chamber Theatre produced three one-act plays written by William Cameron under the heading Three From the Asylum. The Toronto Chamber Theatre was a professional organization of actors who had worked together at the Straw Hat Theatre, with the Holliday Players, and at the University of Toronto. The group was temporarily formed as a showcase for the actors in the company. The plays, In Transit, Ascension, and The Mirror, were presented from October 11 to October 16 for a total of seven performances. William

Cameron also directed the three plays. The producer was Heiner Piller, and the designer Susan Longmire. This was the Toronto Chamber Theatre's first fully professional production. Three From the Asylum had been previously produced at the University of Toronto, at Loyola College and at the Straw Hat Summer Theatre.

No Park in the Fountain

In 1967, No Park in the Fountain, by Dean Taylor, a member of the Eli Rill Playwright's Studio, was produced at the Poor Alex. Dean Taylor had joined Eli Rill's Playwright's Studio when it began in 1965. There were fourteen playwrights involved at this time and the purpose of the group was to encourage the development of Canadian plays. No Park in the Fountain was given a studio production by Rill's Studio before opening at the Poor Alex. Dean Taylor was an announcer for CKEY Radio-News in Toronto. The director of the play was R. Kelly McCormack; the set designers were George and Caroline Sanders. The actors in the play were: Robert Galbraith, Murray Ellis, Marvin Goldhar, Doug MacGrath and Diane Grant.

No Park in the Fountain is set in a small park in a large city. The plot revolves around the condition that, in this science fiction world, to be poor is to have achieved the most revered position in society. The rich are looked on with contempt. The two heroes of the play are hoboes who live in the park. One of these hoboes is actually a very wealthy young man who is trying desperately to get rid of his

excessive wealth. The wealthy young man pretends to be a statue at one point and tries unsuccessfully to stuff \$1,000 bills into an unsuspecting girl's handbag. The young man begs for dimes from passersby; he carries a money-changer to give change to over generous donors. John, the most revered of all in the park, is the second hobo, and he is truly poverty-stricken. A young girl, Angela, enters the park. She is pretending to be a stenographer; in actuality, her father is a millionaire. The girl is a masochist and whips herself when she does something she considers improper. Suffering, she explains, is necessary for her happiness. The man she works for is a successful businessman who just can't lose money. His latest attempt to squander his wealth involved the purchase of the world's marshmallow market. An unforeseen worldwide craving for marshmallows developed and his wealth multiplied. The businessman almost goes mad under the strain of success after success. Angela finally gives her inheritance away as part of "Operation Conflagration," a newly initiated law which allows anyone with more than \$100,000 to donate their money to the government. Angela and John fall in love, then to their horror realize that Angela has made John one of the richest men in the world by making him her insurance beneficiary.

Janine Manitas wrote:

This material -- it is not what is commonly known as a "play" -- (indeed we need a new vocabulary) -- might best be described as a series of repeated non-sequiturs: in effect a series of the same skit that appears to change

because some of the words and deeds change, but which in fact alters not at all . . . ¹

In No Park in the Fountain: "One line does not lead to another; the scenes are not accumulative."² The play, according to Miss Manitas was about aggressive love, money and power. The set, based on the narrator's discussion of "once-upon-a-time," was well executed, but "has nothing to do with what is at hand. Lights and sound could do all that is necessary."³ Dean Taylor, as a playwright:

. . . is still unable to trust his own quirky way of seeing the world. This is evident in the production's persistent need to make No Park into a conventional play, to set it into a conventional mold.⁴

Nathan Cohen applauded No Park in the Fountain and felt that Dean Taylor's play encouraged a certain amount of hope for the cause of the Canadian playwright.⁵ No Park in the Fountain was:

. . . a nimbly devised and animated cartoon. Its buoyant humour comes laced with the precision of a Lewis Carroll and the extravagant, impeccably reverse logic of a Eugene Ionesco.⁶

¹Janine Manitas, "There is no play in No Park," Telegram, September 7, 1967.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Nathan Cohen, "Play proves that Canadian stage cause is not hopeless," Star, September 6, 1967, p.39.

⁶Ibid.

Taylor displayed a quality which was:

. . . most unusual . . . a respect for language almost as rare as his feeling for words, both for what they do and don't mean, their emotional color and weight, their flexibility and punning potential. There is real talent at work here, a grinding intelligence.⁷

Cohen did not like Taylor's use of a narrator who opened and closed each act with a speech which the critic found irrelevant and repetitive.⁸

The play "almost totally makes sense" but Taylor made one point:

Toward the end . . . about time real, time heightened or dulled (sic) by unfamiliar sensations and time imagery, which is garrulous and anyway explains what is already clear.⁹

No Park in the Fountain, according to Herbert Whittaker, dealt with:

Social comment, marshmallow whimsy, and a lot of really amusing gags are kept in hand by Taylor's good sense of design . . . His play moves forward quite steadily and having moved mercifully stops.¹⁰

The director, R. Kelly McCormack, deserved credit "for revealing the virtues of the play," although McCormack:

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Herbert Whittaker, "Taylor's Fountain Spouts Aristophanes," Globe, September 7, 1967.

. . . could have trusted it more, and let its good sense emerge from the marshmallow topping. Instead, he has encouraged his performers to cuteness, which reduces the play.¹¹

The play was only seventy minutes long, an added advantage -- "it contents itself with being short."¹²

Six Cars a Year

In 1967, Six Cars a Year by Harvey Markowitz was produced at the Poor Alex and ran from October 9 to 19. The director was Bill Pevzner; the designer was Hanny Bauland. In the cast were: Rish Powell, Stan Ross, Robert Hightower, Gerry Huckstep, and Jan Sutherland.

Land on my Property

In 1968, a second play by Harvey Markowitz, Land on my Property, was produced at the Poor Alex. David Corfield was the director, George Williams was the designer. The play ran two-and-a half hours and was presented from January 11 to 20.

Land on my Property is set in an old farm-house. A ruthless land developer becomes involved in the domestic problems of an old Polish-Canadian farmer, his dull-witted son, and the son's frustrated

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

wife.

The opening night audience of Land on my Property, according to Jim McPherson of the Telegram, became "unglued" during the performance of the play, shouted at the actors, laughed loudly and rudely and caused a general furore.¹³ McPherson found their behavior "unforgivable," and in an attempt to be constructive chose not to write a critique "of witty poison" but instead enumerated the faults of the play: the plot was too incredible; the subject matter, described as "A Modern Tragedy" in the playbill, was too advanced for the playwright's skills; the dialogue was "cliché-ridden and melodramatic" although it did sometimes achieve naturalness in the quieter moments.¹⁴ The actors "at best barely competent, at worst simply embarrassing" did not help the production.¹⁵ The first act was "a hair-raising pastiche of The Goon Show, Pappa is All and East Lynne."¹⁶ The second act was an improvement "but it, too, gradually sickens and dies in a miasma of rather grotesque disclosures wrapped in unintentionally funny prose."¹⁷

The actors were: M. Albert Olbryski as the father; Richard Davidson as the land developer; George Moore as the son; and Edith Shaw as the wife.

¹³ Jim McPherson, "A Modern Tragedy -- without a doubt," Telegram, January 12, 1968.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The lack of descriptive material available about these low-budget productions of Canadian plays indicates the difference that money can make in Canadian theatre. Adequate publicity, longer runs, experienced actors, and artistic sets and costumes not only attract a larger audience, but they can also mean the difference between critical recognition and oblivion. The Poor Alex is obviously more of a workshop where actors and playwrights can try out their talents and in this role it provides a necessary outlet for Toronto's inexperienced artists.

Chapter X

SHORT TERM PRODUCTIONS AT TORONTO CENTRAL LIBRARY

The Toronto Central Library Theatre provided a home for the production of twenty-five original Canadian plays in the Sixties. One of the major attractions of this small, 209 seat theatre has been its low rental fee. In the Sixties, for example, the theatre could be rented for one day at \$50, for a week at \$190, and for more than four weeks at \$165 a week. This encouraged many small, struggling professional groups to produce here. In addition, many university productions, non-professional little theatre productions and visiting theatre productions were staged.

Originally an auditorium, the theatre, from 1930 to 1958, was used for meetings and for occasional stage productions. From 1959 to 1961, the auditorium was partially remodelled, and reactivated as a theatre. From 1961 to 1962, the theatre was completely remodelled. Stepped seating, an enlarged stage, dressing rooms and an air conditioning system were installed.¹ The stage, which runs the full width of the theatre, can be used as an open, apron stage or with a (removable) proscenium arch. The theatre, including a large foyer

¹Harriet Parsons, "The Central Library Theatre and Theatre and Drama Library -- History and Development -- 1930 to 1962," Information Office, Toronto Central Library, pp.1-4.

and the library's Theatre and Drama Section adjoining the foyer, was designed by Irving Grossman.²

Ten of the twenty-five Canadian plays were produced by non-professional groups, four by student groups and three were professionally produced musicals. The eight professional non-musical productions were staged by a variety of groups, such as Alliance Productions, Jonas-Malcolm Productions and Belmont Theatre Productions. Aries Productions and the Canadian Players also staged Canadian plays at the Library Theatre.

Fortune and Men's Eyes

In 1967, Alliance Productions of New York produced Fortune and Men's Eyes at the Toronto Central Library Theatre. The playwright, Canadian John Herbert, had tried unsuccessfully for several years to produce his play in Toronto. It was not until Fortune and Men's Eyes proved a Broadway success that Mr. Herbert achieved his goal. The story of this production is possibly the most complicated history of any Canadian play.

John Herbert was born in Toronto in 1929. In 1960, he organized a non-professional theatre workshop known as Adventure Theatre. In 1962, the name of Adventure Theatre was changed to New Venture Players. As noted earlier, Herbert directed Private Club and A Household God, two of his early one-act plays at the Bohemian Embassy in the same year. These plays were also presented at the Newmarket Play Festival in

²Ibid.

Newmarket, Ontario. In 1964, the New Venture Players staged Herbert's adaption The Lady of Camellia's at the Victoria Auditorium. In 1965, Herbert's company opened in the newly-built Garret Theatre, at 714 Yonge Street. Also in 1965, Fortune and Men's Eyes was given a workshop production at Stratford, Ontario, directed by Bruno Gerussi. Herbert planned to produce Fortune and Men's Eyes at the Garret but due to financial difficulties he lost the theatre before he accomplished this goal. His group reorganized once again as The New Venture Players. In 1967, Herbert built the second Garret Theatre, at 529 Yonge Street. By this time Fortune and Men's Eyes was a New York success. The new Garret Theatre was subsidized by royalties from the American production.

Fortune and Men's Eyes originally opened in "The Little Room" in the Actor's Playhouse, New York, on February 23, 1967. Mitchell Nestor directed the play; the set was designed by C. Murawski; costumes by "Jan"; and music and sound effects by Terry Ross. The original New York cast was: Victor Arnold ("Rocky"), Robert Christian ("Mona"), Bill Moor ("Queenie"), Terry Kiser ("Smitty") and Clifford Pellow (the guard).

Fortune and Men's Eyes was originally to have made its Toronto debut at 11 Trinity Square. This proved impossible and when Aries Productions vacated the Toronto Central Library Theatre, Alliance Productions booked the theatre for the remainder of the 1967 season. Fortune and Men's Eyes previewed on October 17 and opened on October 19, 1967. After a run of fifteen weeks in Toronto the play opened in

Montreal for a two and a half week run at Le Centre (November 22 to December 10). Fortune and Men's Eyes returned to the Library Theatre on December 26, 1967. An attempt to replace the New York cast with an all-Canadian cast proved difficult. In the Toronto production, the guard was played by Ed Kovens, Smitty was played by Peter Beiger. The remainder of the cast was identical to the original New York cast.

The set for the play is a four bunk cell in a Canadian reformatory "prep school for the penitentiary." A door leads to an unseen corridor, a second doorway to the toilet and shower room. The set, a reconstruction of the New York set, was done by Paul Swayze.

Smitty, a new prisoner, aged seventeen, learns shortly after his arrival that without a protector, known as an "old man," a new recruit is open for physical attack from the other inmates. The guards are corrupt and offer no protection. Rocky proposes that he act as Smitty's "old man." Smitty accepts Rocky's protection, without realizing the sexual implications. When Mona and Queenie are gone from the cell, Rocky forces Smitty into the shower room, and rapes him.

Act I, scene 2 takes place several weeks later. Smitty is still under Rocky's "protection" but he is beginning to mutiny. The Christmas concert is approaching and Mona, who plans to give a reading from Shakespeare, leaves to get a book from the prison library. Rocky is wanted "at the big office" and also leaves. Alone with Smitty, Queenie convinces him to turn on Rocky and become "top dog in the corner." When Rocky returns to the cell, Smitty beats him

up in the shower room.

The second and final act takes place on Christmas Eve. Rehearsals for the concert are taking place. Queenie, dressed in "drag" practices a sensual rendition of "A Good Man is Hard to Find," and her act is a complete success. Mona is refused permission to read her selection from The Merchant of Venice because the guards are afraid it will cause trouble. Rocky and Queenie leave for the concert and Smitty remains behind to keep Mona company. Mona tells Smitty how a group of local toughs beat him up and "framed" him. Smitty asks to be Mona's "old man." Mona refuses, afraid to face the reality of a real emotional involvement. Smitty is angry but slowly regains his composure and asks Mona to read him the passage from The Merchant of Venice which begins: "When in disgrace with Fortune and Men's eyes . . ." When Rocky and Queenie return and find Smitty and Mona sitting closely together they try to beat the couple up. Smitty wins control. A guard enters, breaks up the fight, and takes Mona away for punishment. Smitty, in a rage, forces Queenie and Rocky to sit in the toilet room until lights out. Smitty then listens silently to the sounds of Mona's beating. Finally he speaks: "I'm going to pay them back." Turning to the audience "with a slight, twisted smile that is somehow cold, sadistic and menacing" he delivers the final line of the play: "I'll pay you all back."³

Fortune and Men's Eyes drew large audiences and received

³Herbert's play is available in paperback from Grove Press, New York (c 1967).

intense positive critical acclaim in Toronto. The critics described the play as "realistic," "hard-hitting" and "truthful." They praised the play's powerful theatrical impact.

Nathan Cohen described the play as:

. . . a form of dance-drama, in which the merger of speech and action and unspoken yearnings unpeels layer after layer of search for position, for love (and the play is no rationale or celebration of homosexuality, anything but), for self-respect as well as survival.⁴

On the negative side, Cohen found the sequence of action too precipitous, relationships ill-defined and the character of the guard ambiguous.⁵

Gordon Jocelyn wrote that Fortune and Men's Eyes was not:

. . . just a pornographic peep show for voyeurs . . . the horrifying impact lies rather in the strength and honesty of the situation, the brutality and exactness of the language and action. Obscene it may be -- vicious, violent, and heartless, but only because the system which it exposes and which breeds its own moral perversion and deterioration is similarly loathsome.⁶

As a playwright, wrote Ralph Hicklin, John Herbert had:

. . . a sensitive ear for colloquial speech, though his speech is not for sensitive ears. He can be

⁴Nathan Cohen, "Fortune and Men's Eyes rich in reality," Star, October 20, 1967.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Gordon Jocelyn, "Fortune and Men's Eyes," Montreal Gazette, November 4, 1967.

extraordinarily funny (as in the character of Queenie) . . . and extraordinarily mordant, in recreating the loveless desperation of prison life. There are, I found, many moments when the speech loses its essential truth, and becomes a trifle highfalutin (sic) for the situation; but certainly the major part of the dialogue rings hideously true.⁷

Herbert's plot was "sparse and judicious" in Act I.⁸ In Act II "the tension slackens, until the wildly violent grand guignol with which the play ends."⁹ The actors "beautifully served the playwright."¹⁰

Herbert Whittaker praised John Herbert's "vivid, pungent writing."¹¹

The overall reaction to the play was acclamatory. Herbert was not appeased, however, and spoke sarcastically of the opportunities for the Canadian playwright:

The bitter truth, is that there is more interest in preserving the dying species of Great Whooping Crane than in providing a way for Canadian playwrights to be born.¹²

After his long struggle to produce Fortune and Men's Eyes, this comment seems appropriate, but perhaps the difficulties which Herbert

⁷ Ralph Hicklin, "Theatre," Telegram, December 27, 1967.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Herbert Whittaker, "Perversion in Prison is the Play's Theme," Globe, October 20, 1967.

¹² The Village Voice, August 31, 1967.

encountered help to make his victory more satisfying. The play has now been produced in many languages and many countries. In 1968, in the Vancouver Playhouse's "Stage 2," and in 1969, at the Blue and White Playhouse, National Arts Centre, Ottawa, Herbert's play received further productions. In addition, it has been made into a feature film by Alliance Productions.

Happy Birthday, Death, Thirty Days Hath December and
You're the Only Wasp I Know

In 1968, three one-act Canadian plays were presented by Jonas-Malcolm Productions in cooperation with the CBC radio series "Introducing."

George Jonas, a story editor in the CBC's Talent Services department developed the idea for the "Introducing" series to help Canadian writers. In its three seasons, from 1967 to 1969, "Introducing" broadcast sixty-five original Canadian plays. The three one-act plays had originally been a part of this series. Jonas, in collaboration with Doctor Andrew I. Malcolm (Ian Malcolm, playwright), produced the stage versions. The three plays were: Happy Birthday, Death, by Jack Winter, Thirty Days Hath December, by Ian Malcolm, and You're the Only Wasp I Know, by Grace Richardson.

Happy Birthday, Death had originally been produced at Stratford, Ontario by Toronto Workshop Productions. The play then underwent a title change and certain plot revisions before opening in Toronto as The Golem of Venice. At the time of this production, Winter

was no longer working with Toronto Workshop Productions but was developing a multi-media work for the opening of the new National Arts Centre, Ottawa. This was produced in 1969 under the title of Party Day.

There are two main characters in Happy Birthday, Death. An American general and a scientist observe and comment on the progress of the Manhattan project which culminated in the tragic bombing of Hiroshima. Two secretaries (played by Mia Anderson and Kay Hawtrey) carry messages for the men. Sound effects consisted of "a collage of voices counterpointing the comments" of the American general (played by James Edmond) and the scientist (played by Gillie Fenwick). Excerpts from the Bhagavad Gita and John Donne were also used.

Ian Malcolm, the author of Thirty Days Hath December, was 41 in 1968 and a well-known Toronto psychiatrist practicing under the name of Doctor Andrew I. Malcolm.

The plot of Thirty Days Hath December revolves around an older couple who decide to take the wife's crippled father out to a wintry hilltop and desert him. They arrive at the chosen spot but the wife is afraid. Her husband executes the plan alone, leaving the old man caught, though still alive, in a bear trap. A trapper arrives and finds the old man. He realizes that if the father dies he will be able to blackmail the husband and wife. So the trapper also leaves the old man to die. The plans of both parties are thwarted, however, when a group of children find the cripple and he is sent to the hospital. Gillie Fenwick played the old father, Kay Hawtry played the wife,

James Edmond played the husband, and William Osler played the trapper.

Grace Richardson, who wrote You're the Only Wasp I Know was a teacher at Sir George Williams University in Montreal. Two of her novels, Douglas and Apples Every Day, were published by Harper and Row in New York. You're the Only Wasp I Know was first presented as a radio play, then as a television play. The Jonas-Malcolm production of the play was the first time Miss Richardson's play had been staged in a live theatre.

There are two characters in You're the Only Wasp I Know, "He" and "She." The play is about a young man who spends an evening with his ex-girlfriend in his apartment. "He" and "She" reflect on past incidents and argue about their present existence. They alternately love and hate each other, and the evening constantly verges on their mutual boredom. They psychoanalyze each other, with unimpressive results. The play ends poignantly, reinforcing the sadness inherent throughout it.¹³

Nathan Cohen wrote that this evening of three plays represented a trend "to something of real value to Canadian playwrights."¹⁴ The three plays revealed some of the difficulties which had to be solved when adapting a play from radio to the stage.

However:

¹³You're the Only Wasp I Know was published in Performing Arts in Canada (Summer, 1969), pp.19-26.

¹⁴Nathan Cohen, "This Mia gives point to The Only Wasp," Star, November 7, 1968.

One would like to see more activity in this direction. The one-acter has become a popular form in today's theatre for making shorthand statements that embody large feelings. An association between producing companies and the CBC would be a most useful way in which to really test the one-act play's flexibility and scope for insights.¹⁵

This association was never finalized; nevertheless this one attempt to translate plays from radio to the stage was an interesting experiment.

Take a Litter

Belmont Productions presented a comedy Take a Litter, written by Gordon Diver at the Toronto Central Library Theatre. Take a Litter was the playwright's first stage play. Diver was born in Montreal and trained as an actor in summer stock and repertory companies in Montreal. He did summer stock in Massachusetts, then studied in New York before moving to Toronto to teach acting at Ryerson and speech and drama at the Forest Hill Junior High School.

Take a Litter revolves around the plight of an ambitious young businessman who plans to marry the daughter of a rich tin-milk millionaire. The young man inadvertently impregnates his secretary. The secretary discovers that she is going to give birth to quadruplets. The characters in Take a Litter form two opposing groups: the young businessman, the spoiled heiress, her protective father, and the father's lawyer are in the first group; the secretary, her artist

¹⁵Ibid.

friend, and the girlfriend of the artist are in the second group. The comedy results from the complications which arise when the businessman tries to keep the two groups apart. In the end, the young businessman marries his secretary and everyone lives happily ever after.

Sylvia Lennick directed Diver's play, which opened on March 27, 1969. Belmont Productions was chartered by the Province of Ontario as a non-profit organization to produce this play. The actors were: David Hemming, Rod Coneybeare, François Vallée, Diana Barrington, Ben Lennick, Stan Ross, Paddy Brian Robertson, Carol Posner and Graham Teeaar.

Take a Litter was not a great success. Herbert Whittaker noticed similarities between Take a Litter and Eric Nicol's Like Father, Like Fun: "the deliberately funny plotting, the naive earthiness, the shallow-planted gags, the general assumption that the audience is game for some foolish fun -- even the punning title."¹⁶ Nathan Cohen panned Take a Litter for "overpowering juvenility and destitution in the areas of imagination, japery, narrative and humor, let alone characterization and truly perceived feeling."¹⁷ The direction was slow and there were too many unnecessary pauses:

And let's have no claptrap, please, about this being an audience's, not a critic's play. Not withstanding the

¹⁶ Herbert Whittaker, "Take a Litter: farce of foolish fun," Globe, April 4, 1969.

¹⁷ Nathan Cohen, "Play Take a Litter littered with faults," Star, March 28, 1969.

absolute ferocious friendliness of last night's audience, the pendulum of the machine registering laughs barely moved all evening, and then no more than once or twice during each of the seven scenes.¹⁸

The Library Theatre is not a large theatre yet it accommodates a great variety of theatrical productions. Productions here receive more critical acknowledgment than do those at other small theatres such as The Colonnade or The Poor Alex. Its central location on the outskirts of the University of Toronto Campus makes it easily accessible to audiences. The pleasant atmosphere of the theatre and large foyer encourage return visits. These features, combined with the low rental fee and stage facilities available, make the Library Theatre one of the most important centres for short term, low-budget productions in Toronto.

¹⁸Ibid.

Chapter XI

INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS AT THE COLONNADE THEATRE

Another theatre building, like the Toronto Central Library Theatre, designed to house independent play productions was The Colonnade Theatre. The Colonnade Theatre, located in the Colonnade shopping mall on Bloor Street, and called the "Theatre in the Market Place" was opened on October 16, 1963 by the Mayor of Toronto, Donald Summerville. The theatre was developed by Irwin Burns, the Rubin Corporation, and Murray Webber and was designed by Gerald Robinson. With a seating capacity of one hundred and ninety-nine the theatre is shaped like a concrete bowl which rests on four columns. The seats are arranged as an amphitheatre, grouped in a three-quarter circle around the open stage. The Colonnade Theatre provides a stage for a variety of plays, concerts, readings, films, etc.

Between 1964 and 1968, the Colonnade Theatre provided accommodation for over fifteen productions of Canadian plays. Only three of these plays were professionally produced: Before Compeigne by Jack Winter, in 1964 and 1965, by Toronto Workshop Productions (and discussed under the heading Toronto Workshop Productions), The Emperor's New Clothes, a children's musical written by Eli Rill in 1965, and Everyone Except Mr. Fontana, an evening of three one-act

plays written by Charles Dennis and produced by John Prince, in 1968.

Everyone Except Mr. Fontana

Everyone Except Mr. Fontana opened at the Colonnade Theatre on November 12 and ran until November 30. It consisted of three one-act plays: Aztecs and Orange Juice, T-96, and Ever the Vanishing Virgin.

The plays are set in three different apartments of a high-rise complex called The Tiresias Towers, located "somewhere in Toronto." Mr. Fontana is the janitor of the building. The plays were described in the program as a study of "love and loneliness" in Toronto.

The author of Everyone Except Mr. Fontana, Charles Dennis, was twenty-two at the time of the 1968 production. Dennis was a Torontonionian, an actor as well as a playwright.

The plays starred Cathy Chilco, David Foster, and the author, Charles Dennis. Joel Kenyon directed Everyone Except Mr. Fontana, and Peter Rhon designed the sets. Running time for the entire production was one hour and fifty minutes.

Aztecs and Orange Juice has three characters. A girl, played by Miss Chilco, wakes up in a strange apartment the morning after a wild party. Her "date," Barry, has gone out to play tennis. When the girl wanders out of the bedroom, she meets Barry's shy English roommate. "Who are you?" asks the girl, "And where am I?" The roommate, played by David Foster, replies: "I'm Derek and this is our

apartment." "Our apartment . . ." says the amazed girl, ". . . Are we married?" Derek, nervous and hesitant, is the exact opposite of his swinging roommate. Derek spends his Saturday nights drinking Coca-Cola and watching Star Trek on television. The girl is attracted to Derek, especially after he reads her some of his poetry. Barry, played by Charles Dennis, returns, loses his temper because Derek has "moved in on his broad," and soon departs, leaving the couple to get to know each other.

T-96, named after an answering service, also has three characters. Peter and Teddy, two homosexuals, are sharing an apartment. Teddy, played by Charles Dennis, is an unemployed dancer. Peter, his roommate, played by David Foster, meets a girl, recently arrived from Winnipeg, who needs a place to stay. She moves into the apartment; Teddy is irritated by her presence; he is a hustler by nature and she impinges upon his freedom. Teddy finally leaves Peter and the girl to work out whatever arrangement they choose. The girl was played by Cathy Chilco.

The last play, Ever the Vanishing Virgin, is about a young poet, Robert Copeland (played by Charles Dennis). The title of the play is that of Copeland's one successful book. The poet considers himself a second Leonard Cohen; in fact, he sometimes gets Cohen's mail. Copeland was married for five days, and then he and his wife decided that they were both too individualistic to live together. Copeland takes over the apartment of a friend, a lawyer named Stanley Bernstein (David Foster). Bernstein is shocked when Copeland immediately starts

to take out other women. His shock is dismissed by Copeland as being mere prudishness. Unexpectedly, Mrs. Copeland (Cathy Chilco) returns from Philadelphia. The separated couple begin to discuss their relationship and Ever the Vanishing Virgin ends on a serious note.

Jim McPherson praised the three plays' "originality, charm and craftsmanship."¹ In McPherson's opinion, Dennis' main gift as a dramatist was the ability to write "delightfully buoyant and realistic small talk."² Aztecs and Orange Juice was the best example of this.³ In T-96 the characters were not as appealing or as successfully drawn as those in Aztecs and Orange Juice.⁴ In the third play, Copeland, the poet, was the least convincing of Dennis' characters, "due in part to Dennis' own performance as the unhappy bard; for while his writing contains much truth and vigour, his acting abilities appear less pronounced."⁵ Dennis' portrayal of Barry, Teddy, and Robert Copeland tended to be repetitive.⁶ McPherson praised Foster and Miss Chilco who portrayed their characters with skilful differentiation.⁷ The director, Joel Kenyon, kept the three plays moving

¹Jim McPherson, "Will success spoil Charles Dennis?", Telegram, November 13, 1968.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

spontaneously and with credibility, and the sets by Rhon, in addition, were "thoughtfully individualized."⁸

Herbert Whittaker suggested that the production be renamed "An Evening with Charles Dennis," because Dennis dominated the productions both as playwright and actor.⁹ Dennis' creative talents were -- "those of a brisk executive rather than an artist."¹⁰ The critic, however, pointed out that:

. . . One's admiration of Dennis is mainly because of the confidence and energy which projects him into such a situation. His writing style is that of a television gag writer but he has also some of that profession's ingenuity in shaping a situation. His comedy may be tinsel but it has a sparkle to it.¹¹

Joel Kenyon, the director, staged the plays in a way which developed the best of Dennis' material.¹² The production was simple and to the point. Nevertheless:

. . . only a powerhouse director and perhaps hypnotist could come between the playwright and his vision of himself, and help him to communicate more deeply his basic theme of love and loneliness in Toronto.¹³

⁸Ibid.

⁹ Herbert Whittaker, "Three playlets at the Colonnade an Evening With Charles Dennis," Globe, November 13, 1968.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

The most "effective" play of the three, for Whittaker, was Ever the Vanishing Virgin "because Dennis has crowded into it his strongest lines, most of them in scorn of the square."¹⁴ Aztecs and Orange Juice was the least effective because Dennis' "concept of a sensitive little romance" hindered the actors.¹⁵

Don Rubin remarked that the evening began with the hardness of a hockey puck, but the plays became progressively more sluggish as the evening developed.¹⁶ Rubin suggested that the three plays by Dennis were of too high a quality of workmanship to be discarded, but they definitely needed to be "re-hardened, and the whole thing re-iced."¹⁷ Rubin enjoyed the characterization of the writer Copeland until Dennis began "to moralize and philosophize and romanticize."¹⁸ Dennis was at his best when he ridiculed the world, and laughed at himself.¹⁹ The director instilled "a keen sense of whimsy" into Dennis' work and directed the plays "with a sure and fast pace."²⁰ The actors were "intelligent, interesting and ingratiating performers."²¹ In summary, Rubin wrote:

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Don Rubin, "In Mr. Fontana, theatregoers meet a fine writer, fascinating people," Star, November 13, 1968.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

It is basically a good evening in the theatre for we are treated to a nimble writer of great comic talent and we are introduced to some unusual and fascinating human beings. There are "echoes" here, of course, for Mr. Dennis is a derivative writer. But derivative here is not meant in the pejorative sense. There are very few writers today who can blend together in dramatic form the acerbity of New York Jewish humor, the humanity of Lenny Bruce and the comic sensitivity of Neil Simon.²²

In brief, Rubin felt that Dennis' faults as a playwright could be attributed to lack of experience; he found potential in Aztecs and Orange Juice, T-96, and Ever the Vanishing Virgin, potential which even saw moments of fulfillment during the evening.²³

The Varsity reviewer, Larry Haiven, regarded T-96 as a failure but did not explain his comment.²⁴ Ever the Vanishing Virgin had a tendency to sound "corny" but the production style and the actors were good.²⁵ In general: "The plays are amusing and exciting; they hardly ever lag."²⁶ They were, however ". . . when examined closely . . . quite shallow. If it had not been performed as nimbly as they were, it would have been very easy to leave unsatisfied."²⁷

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Larry Haiven, "an amusing evening from everyone except mr. fontana," Varsity, November 15, 1968.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

Chapter XII

THE CANADIAN PLAYERS

The Canadian Players began producing plays in 1954 but until their 1965 season they were primarily a touring company producing plays related to the curriculum of Canadian secondary schools. In the 1965 season, the Canadian Players split into two groups; the first group toured the Eastern Provinces, while the second group played the pre-Christmas season at the Toronto Central Library Theatre. In January, 1966, the first group moved into the Library Theatre to complete the season, while the second group went on tour. A French-Canadian branch of the Canadian Players, Les Jeunes Comédiens, also toured Canada.

The Toronto Central Library Theatre was leased by the Canadian Players for two years. During the first season at the Library Theatre, six plays were presented. Two of these plays, The Partition and The Departures were by French-Canadian playwright Jacques Languirand. Languirand's plays were translated into English by Albert Bermel.

The playwright, Languirand, had a varied and impressive career as a radio and television animator, dramatist, art critic, reporter-director, news commentator, film maker and teacher. He wrote novels and documentary reports as well as plays. His plays include: Les Insolites, Le Roi Ivre, Hamlet, Diogene, Klondyke, Le Gibet, Les Violons de l'Automne. Languirand wrote the libretto for Louis Riel

for the Canadian Opera Company in 1967, collaborating with Maver Moore and Harry Somers. In 1970, his comedy Man, Inc. opened at the Saint Lawrence Centre in Toronto, with special effects by the National Film Board.

The Partition

The Partition, a half-hour "curtain raiser" is about two lonely people who live in adjoining rooms of a hotel. "He" and "She" want to meet, but both are afraid to take the first step. Neither has the courage to go beyond furtive pipe-tapping and repeated opening and closing of windows. "He" walks down the hotel corridor and tries to catch a glimpse of "She" through her keyhole. "He" panics at the risk of being caught and quickly returns to his room. Ultimately they both go to bed, with a final quiet, sad "good-bye" to the wall which separates them.¹

"He" was played by Ken James, "She" by Chantal Beauregard. Many of the actions and props in the play were mimed. "She" enters, for example, with non-existent bags and hangs up her invisible clothes in an imaginary closet. The wall which divides the two is also imaginary.

The Partition, wrote Ronald Evans, "has charm and gentle humour but it's no more than a two-finger exercise, poorly translated from the

¹Les Cloisons, the French edition of The Partition, was published in Paris, France, in 1962. An English translation is available in typescript at the Toronto Central Library.

French so that it emerges more baroque than it is."² He suggested that the direction by Jacques Zouvi was too realistic; the play should have resembled a "rather merry miniature ballet with wistful overtones."³ Ken James appeared to be very self-conscious; Chantal Beauregard was too extreme in her definition of "She," at times overly sophisticated, at other times overly hysterical.⁴ The set for The Partition designed by Mark Negin was "more suitable for the celebration of a Black Mass than a chuckling piece of fantasy."⁵

The Departures

The Departures, Languirand's second play, revolves around a poor family preparing to move from their apartment into less expensive accommodations. The father is a frustrated writer; his wife serves him sympathetically but mindlessly. Sophie, their teen-age daughter, plans to escape the family problems by eloping with her boyfriend. Unfortunately for her, the boyfriend is interested in going to the movies more than he is in eloping, and Sophie's hopes are dashed. Eulie, the wife's sister, who also lives with the family, is an old maid. Albert, Eulie's long-departed beau, returns unexpectedly and

²Ronald Evans, "About people, who need people," Telegram, February 18, 1966.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

Eulie leaves with him. Eulie, however, is also thwarted in her attempt to escape. Albert's tales of travel and glory turn out to be lies, his motivation for returning was completely and selfishly sexual. Eulie also returns. The sixth character in The Departures is the wife's father, referred to as "Grandfather." At the end of the play, Grandfather, a grunting paralytic, gets up out of his arm-chair, picks up his suitcase and walks out, leaving a dismayed family behind him.

Paxton Whitehead played the father, Barbara Hamilton, the mother, Rosamund Burne, the sister, Sylvia Shore, the daughter, Frank Aldous, Albert, and Charles Palmer, the Grandfather. The Departures was also directed by Jacques Zouvi. The set, a large room cluttered with furniture and parcels waiting to be picked up by the movers, was designed by Mark Negin and constructed by Lawrence Adams.

Louis-Georges Carrier, in the introduction to the French edition of The Departures wrote:

Les Grands Départs est avant tout une tragédie qui se cache derrière le paravent de la comédie . . . Cette pièce fait le procès d'une société qui n'ose se regarder en face, qui joue l'autruche dans les sables mouvants de l'inconscience . . . Les Grands Départs pourrait se définir par la dualité du ridicule et du sublime qui se chevauchent tout au long de la pièce; de même que par un humour bien particulier dont le style de Languirand est toujours imprégné.⁶

The editor of this edition described the play as "une comédie dont

⁶Jacques Languirand, Les Grands Départs (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1958).

l'humour noir nous a séduit."⁷

Critic Herbert Whittaker described The Departures as a play of the "Theatre of the Absurd" because he found the style and message ambiguous and the overall effect incomplete.⁸ The mood throughout The Departures was one of retrospection and evaluation.⁹ Whittaker did not see The Departures as "a tragedy of failure" because no one in the play ostensibly felt self-pity.¹⁰ Whittaker wrote:

. . . Languirand forbids any psychological solution. His actors, and Zouvi, must play it by ear. If these actors do not share the same interpretation of the play, no matter, we are not to know.¹¹

Because of this, The Departures seemed a difficult play for both actors and director. Paxton Whitehead and Barbara Hamilton "got fun and sometimes sense out of their absurdist drama."¹²

Ronald Evans felt the message of both The Departures and The Partition was: "People, people who need people, better give up and learn to make it alone."¹³ The Departures, set in "a splendid, grimy, lived-in hovel," was the "more complex and satisfying" of the two

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Herbert Whittaker, "Blithe tragedy without answers," Globe, February 18, 1966.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Evans, op. cit.

plays.¹⁴ The Departures was not without problems, however. Zouvi, the director,

. . . handled individual players with grace and flair but . . . failed to find the overall rhythm to draw the play together. Too often The Departures stops, starts, backs up and turns about in bewilderment.¹⁵

The theme of alienation, wrote Nathan Cohen, was handled by Languirand in The Departures, in a matter "partly scornful, partly sympathetic, and romantic in a specifically modern and young French Canadian intellectual way."¹⁶ The play investigated the prisons which one family had created for itself and showed that parents wish to preserve their way of life, be it good or bad.¹⁷ As a writer, Jacques Languirand had "a genuine knowledge of how people think, speak and act; his main problem was his "textual skimpiness."¹⁸ The Departures moved too quickly, without adequate preparatory statements, with the result that the problems of each individual were handled superficially and without satisfactory exploration.¹⁹ The direction, by Zouvi, was:

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Nathan Cohen, "A likeable entertainment . . . ," Star, February 18, 1966.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

. . . assured and eloquent. The darker tones of sadness and anger are conveyed, but not at the expense of the farcical drive. He gives the characters lively things to do which are always in character -- for example, Mr. Whitehead's motions with his hands as he describes the smaller and smaller apartments they might have moved into. The groupings are deftly organized. When Miss Burne, angered that she was not consulted on the moving, appears brandishing a rifle, Mr. Whitehead promptly retreats to shelter behind Miss Hamilton. As they circle around, the daughter watches from the stairway, thumb in mouth, a honey-haired baby doll entranced by the outburst of real violence.²⁰

During the first season at the Library Theatre the Canadian Players received grants totalling \$125,000 from the Canada Council, the Ontario Department of Education, the Centennial Commission, the Province of Ontario Council for The Arts, the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation, the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

The overall attendance for the 1965 to 1966 thirty-week season was seventy-three percent, but during the second part of the first season attendance slumped considerably.²¹ After the second season was completed the Canadian Players amalgamated with the Crest Theatre Foundation, a union which gave birth to Theatre Toronto.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Nathan Cohen, Star, May 4, 1966.

Chapter XIII

THE CREST THEATRE

The Crest Theatre began organizing in 1954 under the aegis of Donald and Murray Davis and their sister Barbara Chilcott. The Davis family had a long theatrical history. Barbara Chilcott began acting with the Canadian Navy Show and "graduated" to the London stage. She also worked in Canadian theatre and television. Donald and Murray Davis began their careers in children's theatre and later acted at Hart House. They also worked in such British repertory theatres as the London Arts Council Theatre, the Glasgow Citizens Theatre, and the Bristol "Old Vic." The brothers were not only actors, but directors and administrators as well. In 1948, they began The Straw Hat Players, a summer stock theatre company which played alternately at Gravenhurst and Port Carling, Ontario. Due to popular demand, two separate companies finally developed. By 1955, the summer box office receipts totalled over \$20,000. After six successful years with The Straw Hat Players, the family decided to open The Crest Theatre. In 1955, the new Crest company moved into an 842-seat converted movie house at 555 Mount Pleasant Avenue. Richard of Bordeaux, by Gordon Daviot, opened the theatre on January 5.

In 1954, the Royal Alex was the only theatre in Toronto, with the exception of small workshop theatres. The Crest intended to run as

Toronto's first professional repertory company. The Davis family hoped

. . . to create a home for theatrical talent in Canada and to attract and interest Torontonians to live theatre . . . to raise the theatre in Canada to the status of a profession, something that had never before been accomplished.¹

From the start, the Crest found that balancing between the successful productions and the failures was a precarious business. The Crest operated as a limited liability company with four hundred and twenty-three stockholders subscribing \$75,000.² The Davis' contributed one-third of the preference shares at \$25,000. Even during the first season the company ran at a loss. An average of \$4,800 a week was needed to finance the Crest. If the house was only half-full, the company could break even but unfortunately this rarely happened. The average annual loss, from 1954 to 1957 was \$32,000.³ Until 1957, this deficit was met by the subscribed initial capital and by personal donations. After 1957, the management of the Crest announced itself unable to meet their deficits and appealed to the public for support.

Murray Davis said:

The original concept was that the Crest should try to

¹Crest Theatre Bulletin, February 17, 1966.

²Crest Theatre Foundation, Press Release, February 17, 1966, p.3.

³Norman Panzica, "The Crest: Quo Vadis?", Performing Arts in Canada, Spring-Summer, 1962, pp.5-6, 63.

compete on a commercial basis. We felt that, in order to prove what we set out to prove, it had no right to exist unless it paid its own way.⁴

Davis' attitude changed when he realized that The Crest would continue to lose money unless it revised its policies. Several important changes did result. In 1957, the Crest Sustaining Fund became a permanent committee to raise money. In the fall of 1957, the Fund raised approximately \$15,000. Members of the Crest Theatre Club donated \$4,000. In spite of these efforts there still remained an unpaid deficit of \$15,000. In 1958, the Crest Theatre company was disbanded and the Crest Theatre Foundation, a nonprofit organization run by a Board of Directors was put into effect. The Crest Theatre Foundation safeguarded the individuals involved against bankruptcy by making it possible for the company to receive grants from foundations, public sources, industries and individuals. Murray Davis became the Foundation's Artistic Director and remained in this position until 1966.

Another important change was the dissolution of the repertory company and the change to open-casting. It was felt that the Toronto public demanded a greater variety of actors. This seems to be substantiated by the fact that when the repertory company was reinstated, in 1959, the loss of box-office revenue increased considerably. The 1959 season ended \$50,000 in the red.⁵

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid, p.6.

By 1964, the total deficit of the Crest Theatre Foundation was estimated at \$127,000.⁶ This sum mounted to \$140,000.⁷ A financial blow was received when the Canada Council refused the Crest's 1964 request for a grant on the grounds that the productions of the Crest Theatre were not of sufficiently meritorious quality. Consequently, the Crest closed for the 1965 season. In a concerted effort the Board of Directors raised \$103,500 of the \$140,000 debt. This sum was covered by guarantees and by other financial arrangements.⁸ The Board also approved a budget reduction of \$55,000, organized an increased ticket sales campaign and announced plans to reopen in December, 1964.⁹

In 1965, the Crest Theatre appealed to the Canada Council, the Metropolitan Toronto Arts Council and the Ontario Council to renew their grants. In 1966, the Crest Theatre received grants from the Canada Council, the Ontario Council for the Arts, and the Special Grants Committee of Metropolitan Toronto. In spite of these grants, and a high subscription sales of 4,300 for an eight play season, \$65,000 was still needed.¹⁰ The Crest Theatre hoped to raise its total theatre subscription sales to 11,000 in their proposed 1966 campaign.

⁶Crest Theatre Release, September 15, 1964.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Crest Theatre Release, September 15, 1964, op. cit.

¹⁰Crest Theatre Bulletin, November 17, 1965, p.30.

One of the major policies of the Crest was to present new and original works by Canadian authors. In 1965, John Lockwood, the Chairman of the Crest Theatre Foundation, announced:

The Crest Theatre Foundation's objectives are to stimulate and educate public interest in drama of high quality; to develop Canadian culture, art and drama by means of the theatre; to encourage the production of high quality plays by Canadian authors and to train Canadian actors, directors and designers.¹¹

During the thirteen years in which Murray Davis was Artistic Director, fifteen Canadian plays were presented by the Crest Theatre, out of a total of one hundred and forty plays.¹²

Murray Davis, in 1955, discussed the problems related to the production of Canadian plays. After reading many Canadian scripts Davis concluded that Canada had few talented playwrights. He blamed this deficiency on the misconception that a truly Canadian play was necessarily historical:

The result is that our desks are piled high with scripts dealing with the War of 1812, the opening of the Canadian West, and the lives of Talbot, Montcalm, Frontenac and Riel.¹³

¹¹ John C. Lockwood, "Message from the Chairman of the Crest Theatre Foundation," Performing Arts in Canada, Spring-Summer, 1962, p.4.

¹² Crest Theatre Release, Winter, 1966.

¹³ Sidney Katz, "How (and why) We Run The Crest," Mayfair, September, 1955, p.28.

Canadian writers tended to imitate American plays.¹⁴ The Crest wanted Canadian plays which reflected the actual life experiences of the author. Davis wanted the Canadian playwright to produce:

Something that is warm and real and alive. He doesn't have to paint on an over-size canvas. Let him reflect something of the life of the retired couple living on a quiet street in Victoria, B.C. Let him describe, with sympathy and understanding, the life of a French Canadian in Toronto; the struggle of a New Canadian farmer to find himself in a strange country. Let it be written with some dramatic skill, with an eye to character and plot development, and if possible, a touch of humour.¹⁵

Honor Thy Father

The first Canadian play presented in the Sixties by the Crest Theatre was Honor Thy Father, written by Michael Jacot. This play was produced from March 9 to March 26, 1960.

Michael Jacot was born in London, England, and came to Canada in 1951. Several of Jacot's plays were produced on radio and television and his play The Man in The Red Hat received special mention in the Stratford-Globe Playwriting Contest, 1959.

Honor Thy Father revolves around a French-Canadian family consisting of an aging father, Lemay, his old faithful servant Georges, his spinster daughter and housekeeper, Blanche, a second daughter Mathilde, Mathilde's butcher husband Berchmans, Lemay's three sons

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

Pamphile, Felix, and Clement, and Clement's beautiful girlfriend Armande. The family has gathered at the three hundred year old family Seigneury to discuss debts which the father has secretly accumulated. As the play develops, the father tells Blanche that she is not really his own daughter, but the child of a liason between his wife and Georges. The father disappears, is hastily presumed dead, and a funeral takes place. The eldest son, Pamphile hurriedly sells the Seigneury. In the third act, Blanche breaks down and admits she tried to poison her mother to punish her for her "sin," the existence of which Blanche had known for many years. Papa returns; he had been staying in a cabin in the woods with Joe, the goat-man. Blanche swears to serve Papa for the rest of his life and the play ends.

The director of Honor Thy Father, George McCowan, spent two weeks rehearsing Jacot's play. An allotment of \$25,000 was insufficient to cover a longer rehearsal period.¹⁶ Rehearsals ran for five hours a day, five days a week.¹⁷ McCowan expressed doubt that a successful play could be produced within these time limits. The director agreed that Jacot's play could be staged in two weeks but pointed out: ". . . we're not exploring it properly and investigating the subtleties created by the writer."¹⁸ Jacot sat in on the rehearsals of his play and discussed necessary revisions with McCowan.

¹⁶ Morris Duff, "McCowan Always Fighting The Clock," Star, March 5, 1960.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Jacot altered his script in the evening after his regular workday had ended.¹⁹

Jacot described Honor Thy Father as a play ". . . about the inter-relationships of the characters -- very delicate relationships in a family."²⁰ He was not upset about the short rehearsal span and expressed his confidence in director McCowan's ability. "He gets right up close to the characters," wrote Jacot of McCowan, "and brings out these (delicate) relationships."²¹ The critics, however, did not feel that either Jacot or McCowan were very successful. Herbert Whittaker, referring to Jacot's play, said:

The drama he devised is an interesting one, if not exactly arresting, but by the third act you begin to feel that you are involved in a novel rather than a play. He makes too many points for all of them to register emphatically or even clearly.²²

Jacot's characters were thoughtfully developed.²³ The play was:

. . . more informative than evocative, and the cliché is not avoided. His greatest credit as a playwright, perhaps, comes in building situation and character to the point where revelations were taken seriously by the first night audience.²⁴

¹⁹"New Canadian Play in Final Rewrite," Globe, March 8, 1960.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Herbert Whittaker, "Brilliant Acting Aids New Jacot Drama," Globe, March 10, 1960.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

The feeling of French-Canadian family life and environment was non-existent, according to both Herbert Whittaker and Maver Moore. Moore wrote that if the Canada Council was to continue granting funds for Canadian plays then these plays should, in some way, reflect Canadian life.²⁵ Jacot's play:

. . . reflects not life, Canadian or otherwise, but only other plays -- and unhappily not the best of them. It is a pastiche of tricks which the author imagines will work in the theatre because they have worked before.²⁶

The surprise element was not used to best advantage; Honor Thy Father was too predictable and the circumstances too unbelievable.²⁷ Jacot used "the whole gambit of penny-dreadful thrillers."²⁸ The play needed revision; the characters needed development. Moore stated:

If the Crest is going to gamble on poorly written plays (and I hope they continue to do so, for it is the only way to progress) then let these plays be derived -- however inexpertly -- from the life around us. Only where there is life is there hope.²⁹

²⁵Maver Moore, "It Reflects other Plays," Telegram, "About the Theatre," March 10, 1960.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

Simon Says Get Married

Honor Thy Father was followed by a comedy Simon Says Get Married, in 1961. Simon Says Get Married, by Bernard Slade, is about computer mating and involves four characters: a gag-writer, his scientist friend, a lady statistician, and a "party-girl." "Simon" -- "Statistical Information Machines of Nebraska" -- is a computer which mistakenly matches the scientist with the party-girl and the gag-writer with the statistician. The mistake is discovered and the couples exchange partners only to find that their original mates were more compatible. Austin Willis played the gag-writer, Drew Thompson played the scientist, Jill Foster played the party-girl and Irene Mayeska played the statistician. The fifth character in Simon Says Get Married, an office clerk who runs "Simon," was played by Winnifred Dennis.

The set was designed by Jay Hutchinson Scott and consisted of two units. The first unit was the gag-writer's apartment, the second unit was "Simon's" office. "Simon" was "remarkably well-mannered, offering only a few distinct blinking lights and some muted inner rumbling."³⁰

Simon Says Get Married was first written as a television play. After being presented twice on the CBC, it was adapted for the stage. This was Bernard Slade's first stage production and he described it as

³⁰ Ronald Evans, "After 2 1/2 Hours: Paralysis of Boredom," Telegram, December 9, 1961.

"a terrifying experience."³¹ Slade pointed out that in the theatre the writer was more aware of the relative quality of his work. The actors spoke loudly and clearly during rehearsals, in contrast to television rehearsals where they seemed to have a tendency to mumble.³² Because of this Mr. Slade was constantly aware that "the rather trite, banal line he wrote in the third act will be heard all over the theatre."³³ Slade enjoyed writing for the theatre because he was not forced to observe the stringent time regulations of television writing. The disadvantage was that Simon Says Get Married was so long that "not only would the audience not get out of the theatre until three a.m., but the typists' fees would amount to a small fortune."³⁴ Consequently, Slade edited two characters from the play and made other alterations to reduce the play to what was, in his opinion, a more reasonable length. The great difference, however, between theatre and television was the reaction of a live audience.³⁵ In television writing, the playwright had no idea of the reaction of anyone but himself; in the theatre the audience reaction predominated.³⁶

³¹Bernard Slade, "Playwright's Prenatal Pain," Globe, December 2, 1961.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

Simon Says Get Married lasted two-and-a half hours in performance. The length was severely criticized by the newspapers. Ronald Evans found the length "absurd" and suggested that Simon Says Get Married be cut to a half-hour, or, at the most an hour.³⁷ The plot was "petty" and the characters "a tiresome lot."³⁸ Simon Says Get Married would benefit from a greater variety of characters.³⁹ Evans found each of the existing characters ". . . so busy amusing himself with his own quips (none of which has anything to do with the action of the affair) that he never has time to entertain his colleagues or us."⁴⁰

Herbert Whittaker felt that Simon Says Get Married would "certainly brighten Toronto's holiday season and may have a future if Mr. Slade will take out some of the gags."⁴¹ Whittaker added:

At times it seems that Mr. Slade has in mind the tragedy of a comedian, possibly autobiographical. His hero is a comedy writer for television, given to compulsive joking. He explains that it expresses his need for attention. To emphasize the truth of such a system, Mr. Slade has given his characters many, many jokes, some rather laboured.⁴²

³⁷Evans, op. cit.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Herbert Whittaker, "Too Many Good Jokes," Globe, December 9, 1961.

⁴²Ibid.

The jokes "blur the line of the play and even make you lose track of the mechanics of the plot. When they start to peter out (or when we stop laughing at them) we can see the people as people."⁴³

Nathan Cohen found Slade's characters "wishy-washy," the dialogue dull and over-worked, and the jokes irritating.⁴⁴ Cohen quoted several lines of Simon Says Get Married which seemed to best represent Mr. Slade's style of humour. For example:

Scientist (to blonde): You have a funny mole.
Blonde: But the rest of me is serious.⁴⁵

Another example which Cohen gave was:

Gag-writer: Deep down I'm a great fellow. I have only one fault. I'm obnoxious.⁴⁶

Cohen summarized: "I've always believed that humour is a desirable ingredient in farce, but Mr. Slade holds another view . . . Farce is not his forté."⁴⁷

Emmanuel Xoc

The next Canadian play which the Crest Theatre attempted was

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Nathan Cohen, "An Unfortunate Debut," Star, December 9, 1961.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

Emmanuel Xoc, by Jack Gray, produced in 1965. Jack Gray studied at Queen's University and later was assistant editor to Maclean's Magazine for four years. In 1960, with the aid of a Canada Council grant, Gray moved to England to write plays. In 1968, he returned to Canada and formed a film company.

Emmanuel Xoc is a play about an eccentric eighty-two year old multi-millionaire. Xoc bets Arnold, his university-educated revolutionary African servant, that he can corrupt the first person who comes onto his property. Three confidence men stumble onto the estate after their car breaks down. Xoc offers them lodging for the night. The three men move in and invite a seductive accomplice "Tweedie Veneere" to join them. Tweedie tries to seduce Xoc but Xoc's good nature wins her over to his side. The confidence men decide to "take" Xoc and promise to give Tweedie a part of their nefarious earnings. They also agree to will her the remainder of the fortune they extort from Xoc. Tweedie tells Xoc about their plans. Xoc mixes himself a potion and dies. The next day, Morgan, Xoc's lawyer, comes to read Xoc's will. Arnold has been left \$100,000, Tweedie \$1,000,000, and the remainder of Xoc's fortune is to be shared by the three confidence men. Xoc appears briefly when the will is read, dressed "in angel garb, a light-coloured suit." There is a codocil to the will: the confidence men will only inherit the money if they eat Xoc's brain, tongue, heart and hams. Thus the confidence men are to inherit his intelligence, his wit, his magnanimity and his strength, as well as his fortune. The three men are indecisive but

when Xoc returns again as a ghost the decision is made. In the final scene of the play, Tweedie and Arnold are standing beside Xoc's tomb discussing the four funerals that have just taken place. To win his wager with Arnold, Xoc had killed himself with a poisonous drink that would also kill anyone who had a nibble at his remains. Tweedie and Arnold, realizing that they love each other, decide to marry and return to Arnold's homeland which has just been declared a free state. Arnold will be Minister of Finance and of Taxes. As Tweedie and Arnold leave, Xoc comes out from behind his tombstone and recites:

A rose
 And a rose
 And a rose
 Makes three
 One for Arnold,
 One for me,
 And one for love,
 My love, ⁴⁸
 For thee.

For the last time, Xoc disappears behind his tombstone and the curtain falls.

Emmanuel Xoc was directed by Herbert Whittaker. Jack Creley played Xoc; the crooks were played by William Brydon, John Paris and Ron Hartmann; Gwen Thomas played Tweedie Veneere. Ed Hall played Arnold; Norman Welsh played Xoc's lawyer, Morgan Hirsch. The sets, a city-scape in the first scene with a view of tombstone-like buildings,

⁴⁸ Jack Gray, Emmanuel Xoc. (Typescript available at the Toronto Central Library).

and later a room in Xoc's mansion, were designed by Michael Johnston.

The critics, once again, were relatively unanimous in their disapproval of the Crest Theatre's choice of Canadian play. Wendy Michener wrote that Emmanuel Xoc was not dull and did have a promising plot-line:

But somehow things do not settle down until very near the end when the author introduces a sensational moral question, that of cannibalism, . . . the audience was obviously spellbound.⁴⁹

Miss Michener criticized Gray's tendency to obscure the plot with long sections "on the subjects that fascinate him, like ideas about cannibalism or confidence games, and all this slows down the proceedings."⁵⁰ Xoc was "a ludicrous millionaire, neither funny nor believable," the crooks "seemed to believe that funny lines, like forts, must be taken by force," Tweedie Veneere was "strident, and without the overpowering femininity to convert a woman-hater."⁵¹ The direction and the set both lacked a unified style. The actors ". . . looked ill-at-ease in the oddly assorted variety of styles."⁵² The play was: "Altogether a very curious evening in the theatre, but not a dull one."⁵³

⁴⁹Wendy Michener, "Crest's Xoc Wildly Improbable," Globe, April 22, 1965.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

Ronald Evans disliked the "stale characters and skimpy plot" of Emmanuel Xoc.⁵⁴ The play exhibited "all the sprightly zest of a constipated hippopotamus."⁵⁵ Director Whittaker had "imposed on each and everyone the most obvious mannerisms and responses, and none had the wit or spunk to more than meekly accept them."⁵⁶ The set was:

. . . dominated by a set of funeral black drapes and two side panels the colour of burnt pea soup. Drab flats depicting a library and a greenhouse (each painted by members with wall rollers, I'm sure) were flown in and out and assorted ballustrades and dinner tables rumbled back and forth. The whole thing was utterly depressing.⁵⁷

Nathan Cohen discussed Jack Gray's position as one of Canada's most prolific and most produced stage writers. According to Cohen, Emmanuel Xoc was even less successful than two of Gray's plays previously produced by the Crest Theatre. The humour of the play was not entertaining, even on a purely vaudevillian level.⁵⁸ When Gray attempted to be philosophical, he ended being trite.⁵⁹ For example:

Xoc: For the first time in sixty years, Emmanuel Xoc is afraid of tears and laughter.⁶⁰

⁵⁴Ronald Evans, Telegram, April 22, 1965.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Nathan Cohen, "Xoc -- the reason why," Star, April 22, 1965.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

Emmanuel Xoc seemed designed "to rebut the frequent argument that we shall never have a meaningful and indigenous Canadian theatre until original plays get performed."⁶¹

Murray Davis, defending the production of Emmanuel Xoc, wrote:

The most maligned new play Emmanuel Xoc was, for many who saw it, a hilarious evening of theatre with a stinging blow for many of our sacred cows. And more than that it is not a venial sin to attempt new works which require more rehearsal time and rewriting time and over-viewing time than we can afford. I am not going to defend any new play the Crest does; it is simply part of our function to do them. So the next time come and see it, and judge for yourself.⁶²

In 1970, Jack Gray was asked if he thought that Canadian playwrights were untalented or unproductive. Gray answered:

Because of the growth of regional theatres across Canada, there are more and more opportunities for local playwrights today. We have the facilities, we have good Canadian directors and actors. It's true we don't seem to have the product.⁶³

Canadian playwrights did not write the kind of plays which Canadian audiences generally found exciting.⁶⁴ Gray pointed out that there were, of course, exceptions to this statement, however, he felt that

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²"A Message from our Artistic Director," At the Crest, Spring, 1965.

⁶³"Four for the Future," Globe Magazine, February 12, 1970, p.12.

⁶⁴Ibid.

. . . The big mistake many local writers make is that their plays are primarily about ideas and symbols. I know many young theatre people feel the stage should be a weapon. But I believe audiences want to know about people. About things like jealousy, love, hate.⁶⁵

The Crest Theatre was not successful with any of the above three Canadian plays produced between 1960 and 1965. Two Canadian musicals Mr. Scrooge and Evelyn were more successful but they are out of the range of this study.

In 1966, the Crest Theatre, unable to face the ever-increasing costs of production, closed for the last time. The company was \$30,000 in debt. The financial crisis of 1964 and 1965 foreshadowed the end. Even two very successful plays and a subscription campaign which raised over \$75,000 could not help. The company received \$25,000 from the Canada Council from 1965 to 1966, but the plays produced were box-office failures. When Murray Davis resigned from the Crest Theatre Foundation in 1966, the Crest Theatre closed forever. A merger between the Crest and the Canadian Players was under consideration but did not materialize until January, 1967.

⁶⁵Ibid.

Chapter XIV

THEATRE TORONTO

Theatre Toronto came into operating existence as the result of a merger between the Canadian Players and the Crest Theatre. Theatre Toronto was to operate under the auspices of a larger organizational body: The Canadian Crest Players Foundation.

The new theatre company opened on January 17, 1967. The four plays produced during the first season were presented at the Royal Alexandra Theatre. The first play was The Drummer Boy, by French Canadian Jean Basile. A second Canadian play was also produced during the first season: A Festival of Carol's, by John Hearn.

The administrative staff for the first season were: Clifford Williams, Artistic Director, Nicholas Hutchinson, associate director; Ralph Koltai, head of design; Jeremy Brooks, dramaturge; Mavis Hayman, assistant to the Artistic Director; James R. Watt, general manager; Dennis Sweeting, company manager; and Grannia Mortimer, stage manager. The actors in the first season company were: Bernard Behrens, John Colicos, Maureen Fitzgerald, Colin Fox, Daphne Gibson, David Hamblen, Barbara Hamilton, Dominick Hogan, Eric House, Richard Monette, Jack O'Reilly, Joseph Shaw and Terry Tweed. Other actors were later added to the company.

The company began producing on an optimistic note. Clifford

Williams, the Artistic Director, said:

The most important single act anyone can do in order to give Toronto a theatre company of her own, is to become a member of that company. A theatre is a family -- it contains active directors, writers, technicians, and the public -- the most important member of the family.¹

Theatre Toronto approached over 90,000 Torontonians during their initial membership campaign. The company offered members a wide range of activities -- rehearsed readings, discussions, informal get-togethers, and multi-media events. The subscription campaign raised \$121,000 the first season.² The Canada Council, the Council of Metropolitan Toronto and the Province of Ontario Council for the Arts donated money to Theatre Toronto.³

In spite of the financial encouragement from the public and from grant-giving organizations, the company immediately began to experience money problems. The main barrier to economic success was the salary, of \$40,000 a year, on a three-year contract, which was paid to Clifford Williams. This figure had been originally set to attract Peter Ustinov to Toronto to be Theatre Toronto's first artistic director. Mr. Ustinov declined the offer and suggested that the company hire Clifford Williams. Williams, in turn, was also offered \$40,000 a year. During their first season, Theatre Toronto spent \$498,000, plus \$28,000 in

¹Canadian Crest Players Foundation, Bulletin, June 28, 1967.

²Blaik Kirby, "Theatre Toronto is dead! Long live Theatre Toronto!", Globe, April 12, 1969.

³Canadian Crest Players Foundation, op. cit.

initial organizing expenses. The company drew \$233,000 at the box-office. The first season's deficit, estimated at \$38,000, was in actuality \$32,500.⁴

Clifford Williams followed the policy of the Board of Directors of Theatre Toronto when choosing the plays to be produced. The Board wanted plays that were unusual, or plays of international calibre. Williams, in 1967, wanted Theatre Toronto to hit Toronto like "a wave of bloody shock troops."⁵ He believed that new plays were

. . . the life blood of the theatre. Their presentation is vital to the process of renewal and development which ensures a continuing and healthy theatre.⁶

New plays from other countries "keep us in touch with the world at large, tell us something of the preoccupations and techniques of the international theatre."⁷ Canadian plays "are even more necessary. They speak uniquely of our own situation and they also represent a potential export to the theatres of other countries."⁸ Williams wanted to produce a Canadian play, and ultimately chose The Drummer Boy and A Festival of Carol's, both written by Canadians, for the first season. A series of less-formal, less-organized presentations by Canadian

⁴Kirby, op. cit.

⁵Antony Ferry, "Like a wave of bloody shock troops," Star, May 17, 1967.

⁶Metro Night Life, December, 1968.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

playwrights was also planned.⁹ Williams said:

. . . There ought to be, in another venue, scores of items by Canadians -- way-out, documentary, indigenous stuff. I already have a stockpile of Canadian plays that are not right for the Royal Alex but would provide [a] basis for a program of special showings, rehearsed readings . . .¹⁰

He proposed a two-theatre venture:

. . . The second theatre could also offer a patchwork evening of writing by young Canadian writers. It could stage a full-dress teach-in devoted to the subject of draft-dodgers, or even Toronto theatre. It could offer a reading of pornography, for that matter.¹¹

Unfortunately, these plans never materialized.

The Drummer Boy

The Theatre Toronto production of The Drummer Boy was an English adaption of Jean Basile's French play Joli-Tambour. Jeremy Brooks, the company's dramaturge, wrote the translation. The Drummer Boy was directed by Clifford Williams, Ralph Koltai designed the sets, Reginald Samuel designed the costumes, and the music was written by Richard Johnston.

The Drummer Boy is set in New France in the 1750's. The play

⁹Herbert Whittaker, "A Canadian hall of chance," Globe, October 21, 1967.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

revolves around a young and naïve boy Denis Quevillon, a drummer-soldier in the French army. Denis, at nineteen, has an affair with a willing eleven year old girl, is caught and is sentenced to jail. The boy's innocence and kindness brings out evil in others. In jail, the other prisoners attempt to gang-rape him but are stopped by a Jesuit priest Father de Villeray. Father de Villeray, in turn, is sexually attracted to the boy. Denis is given a choice-through the intercession of the Governor he will be pardoned if he becomes the jail's hangman. Denis accepts and carries out his first assignment. The Governor's daughter, scorned by her fiancé tries to seduce the drummer-boy. Finally, the boy is attacked by a jealous fop and two of the prison guards, who disfigure and castrate him. Denis commits suicide as a result of this brutality. His suicide is officially ruled to be a murder.

The cast of The Drummer Boy was chosen from the Theatre Toronto repertory company. Richard Monette played Denis Quevillon, John Colicos played the Jesuit priest.

The set was simple, a raked platform with very little furniture, and a background of lights which gave the stage a feeling of openness. Herbert Whittaker described the set as having:

. . . a Brechtian starkness, thrust onto Ralph Koltai's dynamically simple setting, largely a raked stage confined by shadowy walls. One bit of Brechtian theatricality, a heraldic decoration, confronts us on our arrival but soon slides out of sight. The lighting is both eloquent and inconspicuous.¹²

¹²Herbert Whittaker, "The Drummer Boy taps out a powerful tune," Globe, January 18, 1968.

Jean Basile, as a playwright, wrote Ralph Hicklin, "must not be condescended to."¹³ The play, for Hicklin, was economical, convinced and witty. Basile "makes the spectator conscious at all times of the timelessness of his subject and that is a great gift."¹⁴ Difficulties perhaps rose as a result of the translation: "Too often, the aristos and the plebs sound exactly alike."¹⁵ In addition, the translation was "occasionally jarring" and the play seemed to be written in episodes which built up "without over-all flow to a powerful impression of the blacker side of our country's history."¹⁶

Nathan Cohen was critical of Basile's play. The Drummer Boy "never rises above a spluttering jumble . . . the text proved to be a quivering botch of vague shapes, muffled sounds and tentative movements."¹⁷ Basile did not match his skills as a writer to the subject matter of the play:

. . . having invented a fascinating dramatic situation and protagonist, Basile dithers around, lurching first in this direction and then that, muttering generalized comments about the unsavory or unacknowledged (sexual) side of the human character, and the oppressive underside of the church and the government, and suggesting that

¹³Ralph Hicklin, "Drummer has first rate beat," Telegram, January 18, 1968.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Whittaker, op.cit.

¹⁷Nathan Cohen, "Beat a slow measure of regret for Drummer," Star, January 18, 1968.

redemption exists only through sacrifice.¹⁸

The play seemed confusing and the character's actions were unclear.¹⁹

In addition, Cohen found the acting poor, Monette miscast and Colicos "muddy."²⁰

In general, Clifford Williams' direction was complimented by some critics, criticized by others. Whittaker wrote that Williams:

. . . has obviously responded to the challenge of the difficult Basile drama for the many qualities that align it with modern theatre: its unromantic view of history, its probing into the origins of one of Canada's two founding nations, its blackness of theme, its cruelty and its examination of mankind's instinct for self-torture.²¹

The total effect of the play, for Whittaker, was that of "a dark, powerful, and ambiguous chronicle."²² Cohen, on the other hand, criticized Williams' staging as ineffectual and "impotent."²³ The most shocking scenes, those in which brutality took place, did not affect Cohen: "Clifford Williams' production is minus an atom of imaginative concentration and continuing force."²⁴ Ralph Hicklin, in

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Whittaker, op. cit.

²²Ibid.

²³Cohen, op. cit.

²⁴Ibid.

contrast to Cohen, found Williams' directorial skills "impressive."²⁵ The flow of the action was good, the movement of the actors economical, and the play was purposeful, although not dynamic.²⁶ Hicklin said:

. . . as a debut (The Drummer Boy) . . . was an auspicious evening, I came away from it wishing Theatre Toronto much happiness.²⁷

Whittaker said:

The result (of the premiere) establishes Theatre Toronto overnight as a positive intellectual, modern and exciting institution by making a contribution that is at once national, bicultural and happily, for Toronto, local.²⁸

Cohen felt that Theatre Toronto ". . . fell flat on their faces with their initial presentation(s)."²⁹

The variety of critical opinions which The Drummer Boy encouraged indicates the hazards which a Canadian theatre company, in the Sixties, faced when choosing a play to produce, especially if this play was an untried, and untested, Canadian composition.

²⁵Hicklin, op. cit.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Whittaker, op. cit.

²⁹Cohen, op. cit.

A Festival of Carol's

The second Canadian play produced in the first season by Theatre Toronto was a comedy A Festival of Carol's, by Torontonians John Hearn. A Festival of Carol's was Hearn's first play. Hearn immigrated to Canada from England in 1952, and worked in the marketing industry. He was forty-seven years old when A Festival of Carol's was written. Hearn had originally sent his script to Maver Moore of the Saint Lawrence Centre. Moore, in turn, sent the script to Theatre Toronto. Williams read A Festival of Carol's and decided to produce it.

A Festival of Carol's is set "where you want it," somewhere in suburbia. Carol gives a party for a friend, Cees, his wife Lola, Fan, a lesbian, and Fan's date Bill. Carol's husband is having an affair with Lola. Suddenly and unexpectedly Gabriel Glory, an escaped murderer who has killed seven wives, arrives at the party. The police enter, there is a scuffle and one of the policemen is shot. George, Carol's husband, is charged with the murder. In the second act, which takes place in jail, Glory tries to make love to Carol, Lola and Fan. In a plot switch, Lola is charged with the murder instead of George. In the third act, the trial begins. At the end of the play, the husband wakes up and discovers that he has dreamt the entire party-jail-trial sequences. The dream was a fantasy about a husband's attempt to establish his superiority over his domineering wife.

A Festival of Carol's, presented from March 20 to April 7, was directed by Richard Digby-Day. The costumes were designed by Reg Samuel, the scenery designed by Douglas Higgins. The stage manager was

Kenneth Frankel, the assistant stage-manager was Peter Hawkins. George was played by Chris Wiggins; Carol by Anna Cameron, Lola by Pamela Hyatt; Cees by Colin Fox, Fan by Barbara Hamilton; Bill by Dominic Hogan; Gabriel Glory "Poet and Criminal" by John Colicos; the policeman, the hang-man, and the judge by Hugh Webster; Gentle, a police inspector, by Richard Monette; and a convict by Eric House.

John Hearn, in the program notes, stated that he decided to write A Festival of Carol's out of admiration for Anna Cameron. He quoted T.S. Eliot: "I think some knowledge of the rules is necessary before you start to break them." On his abilities as a playwright, Hearn said:

Now two years later, I do know some of the rules and that is why it is so much harder to write a second play than the first. With Carol, I had the happy freedom which comes from ignorance, and the fact that the play ever got on the stage is far more a tribute to the director than the writer.³⁰

The stage, said Hearn:

. . . is the only place where we are permitted to take off our masks, where people are allowed to behave the way they really are. So let us relax during these few performances and enjoy ourselves in all our glamour and eloquence, to see ourselves as only we can see us. And when you leave, you can slip your mask back on and walk down King Street safe in the knowledge that no one looking at you would ever guess that you once strode the heaving decks of a corsair or reclined in sunlit gardens while dark-eyed

³⁰Metro Night Life, 1968.

Spaniards duelled for your hand.³¹

The critics were more or less unanimous in their dislike for A Festival of Carol's. Cohen described the play as "a disaster."³² Hicklin said: "John Hearn confesses that he knew nothing about writing plays when he wrote Festival of Carol's . . . one watches the proof of his confession while it becomes clearer minute by minute."³³ Whittaker wrote: "Director Digby-Day has devised a desperate, extravaganza of comic business, precariously based on the Hearn dialogue."³⁴

A Festival of Carol's, according to Cohen, brought Theatre Toronto's first season to "a mirthless, melancholy finish." Cohen wrote:

The depths the author digs as he takes us from an archly mad cocktail party to a coyly mad jail confabulation to a whimsically mad mock trial are extremely superficial, and the message contained in the findings is altogether unambiguous . . . That message is that the trouble with modern, middle-class society in the United States and Canada is modern, middle-class women.³⁵

The costumes, music, use of the aisles and certain pantomime scenes were of satisfactory quality. Cohen also noted the set which was

³¹Ibid.

³²Nathan Cohen, "Carol's brings Theatre Toronto's first year to a mirthless, melancholy finish," Star, April 8, 1968.

³³Ralph Hicklin, Telegram, 1968.

³⁴Herbert Whittaker, "Theatre Toronto: where to survive," Globe, December 6, 1968.

³⁵Cohen, op. cit.

designed to resemble children's building blocks, using a steel construction framework.³⁶ The script revealed Hearn's "umbilical tie with British nonsense writers."³⁷ Inexplicable plot changes, a weak narrative line, and a "nonsensical" script weakened the play.³⁸ Cohen wrote condemningly:

The show, which opened last night and must stay around for two and a half agonizing weeks, may have some faint academic use -- though I cannot imagine with whom -- as a copybook example of how to try honorably where there is no chance of success.³⁹

Clifford Williams defended his choice of the play: "I read John Hearn's A Festival of Carol's again after I saw it. I still like it. I don't say I liked what I saw."⁴⁰

In 1968, Theatre Toronto moved to new offices at Eleven Trinity Square. Four plays were produced at the Royal Alexandra Theatre. None of the 1968 productions were Canadian plays.

The salary paid to Clifford Williams continued to cause major problems for the company. It became increasingly difficult to pay him especially since the choice of plays for the first and the second season had not drawn the Toronto theatre-going public in substantial numbers. Finally, in January, 1969, Williams voluntarily left the company and

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Whittaker, op. cit.

returned to England.

The second season was a difficult one for Theatre Toronto. A new Artistic Director could not be decided upon and the company substituted a special director, Richard Digby-Day. The first play of the second season, Edward II, was unsuccessful and drew only a fifty percent house. The subscription campaign for the second season was also a failure. In the first season \$121,000 had been raised, in the second season only \$66,000 was raised.⁴¹

For the 1969 to 1970 season, Theatre Toronto had planned a fifteen week season of five plays. Hopes for carrying out these plans soon faded. A new Artistic Director had still not been found, and the deficit of \$80,000 from the first two seasons was mounting.⁴² Theatre Toronto was saved from extinction by an opportune coalition with the as yet unopened Saint Lawrence Centre for the Arts for which it became the resident company. The fortunes of the group immediately began to improve. The deficit dropped to \$13,000 by the end of November, 1969, with the aid of grants from the Canada Council, the Province of Ontario Council for the Arts and the city of Toronto.⁴³ In addition, a fund raising campaign contributed \$60,000. Furthermore, the Saint Lawrence Centre was to provide Theatre Toronto with a permanent home and two of the members of Theatre Toronto's Board of

⁴¹Kirby, "Theatre Toronto is dead!", op. cit.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

Directors were placed on the Centre's Board of Management.⁴⁴

Many reasons, from a variety of sources, were given for Theatre Toronto's lack of artistic and financial success. Maver Moore, Artistic Director for the Saint Lawrence Centre, placed the blame on the choice of plays and also on the fact that the company had imported the majority of its designers, directors, and actors. Moore predicted that Theatre Toronto, working under the auspices of the Centre would be

. . . transformed. We are on record that our resident company will be dedicated to giving the best possible showcase in English-speaking Canada to Canadian performers, playwrights, composers, designers and technicians.⁴⁵

Leon Major, Theatrical Consultant to the Saint Lawrence Center, agreed with Moore that the main fault was Theatre Toronto's choice of plays:

. . . The first problem of the resident company in the centre is to win the confidence of the public in Toronto. There's a widespread feeling that the public's confidence in theatrical productions in this city has been severely shaken.⁴⁶

Major added:

I feel strongly about new works -- and not necessarily only Canadian new works. But whoever takes over the

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Centre has to make a decision as to whether the new works might win the public.⁴⁷

Dubarry Campau, a journalist, suggested that Toronto audiences did not want to be "culturalized," they wanted to be entertained.⁴⁸ They did not wish to be taught and they demanded variety. Theatre Toronto had been criticized because a majority of the plays dealt with homosexuality. Campau felt that while the public were accustomed to this theme, they did not appreciate a constant repetition of it.⁴⁹ The policy which gave the Artistic Director the choice of plays was a sound one, according to Campau, however the Artistic Director ". . . whoever he is, should pay some attention to the climate in which they are to be done."⁵⁰ One of the Theatre Toronto Board members, Mrs. J.A. Seed said:

. . . theatre is an art. You can't compare it to hockey and say 'if you can't make it pay, get out'! You have to sneak up on the public. Personally I thought last year's season (1967-1968) was a very exciting adventure -- but perhaps it was too soon to thrust that much on the public at once. Now, we're stepping backwards with plays like the Shaw -- the kind of thing most people seem to want have to be realistic.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Dubarry Campau, "They won't go to plays they don't like," Telegram, March 1, 1969.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

In view of the developments of the late Sixties, Theatre Toronto's planned 1969 to 1970 season was disbanded so that the company could prepare the productions which were to open the new Centre in 1970.

Chapter XV

CONCLUSION

A series of recurring problems presented themselves to the Toronto professional theatres attempting to produce Canadian plays in the Sixties. The main hazard, obviously, was lack of money. This factor detrimentally influenced all areas. Lack of money was a factor which had to be considered when the plays were chosen, and when production schedules were devised. It meant lower standards of production, and of publicity. It put the companies under a constant pressure to succeed. Many theatre companies learned the hard way -- by closing down. Other groups appealed for grants, year after year, and learned to work within the limits of subsidization, some with considerable support, others with minimum support.

On the threshold of the Seventies, this latter trend continues, and indicates that theatre in Toronto has a more stable foothold than it did in the Sixties. Both the highly subsidized theatres, such as the Saint Lawrence Centre for the Arts, and the low-budget "underground" theatres, such as the Factory Lab Theatre, are exploring and developing, each within its own special sphere.

The Saint Lawrence Centre, which opened in February, 1970, was built at a cost of 5.4 million dollars to be the focal point for Toronto's community activities. Among the programs which the Centre

proposed were civic political teach-ins, sport events, science demonstrations, consumer affairs programs, folk, rock, and classical concerts, and religious debates, as well as children's plays, satirical revues, dramas, and multi-media "happenings." Although Theatre Toronto became the resident repertory company, stage facilities were to be available to visiting theatre, dance and opera groups, both amateur and professional. The Centre has two theatres, an eight hundred and thirty seat "Theatre" with thrust, proscenium and triptych stages, and a four hundred and eighty-three seat "Town Hall." The Centre was designed by architect Gar McInnes of Gordon Adamson and Associates.

The original General Director of The Saint Lawrence Centre was Maver Moore; as of July, 1970 Leon Major took over from Moore. The administrators were optimistic about the Centre's potential:

. . . it will accommodate a resident theatre company, productions for children and youth and occasional films and other activities. The resident company will be "committed to freshness, to vigor, to our country in our time" and will emphasize plays by Canadian writers. While the resident Centre company is on tour, the Centre will present attractions mounted by other Toronto and Canadian companies. An active workshop program is planned, from which new writing, directing, designing and acting talent will be drawn.¹

Maver Moore said:

The Centre promised to make its Theatre a showcase for the nation and to provide opportunities for

¹"The Saint Lawrence Centre -- it's your place," Globe Magazine, February 21, 1970, pp.10-11.

Canadian playwrights. We have also been guided by the belief that to flourish in the age of mass media, the theatre must take new forms for a new audience.²

Bruce Lawson, the Centre's Program Director, hoped that the building complex would become a true community meeting place

. . . always filled with people enjoying and expressing themselves as fully as possible. . . . I would like to see a great deal of use of the place by people and groups that are not normally in a position to use established symbols such as the Saint Lawrence Centre . . .³

The Centre opened on February 26, 1970 with two plays in its repertory. Both Man, Inc by Jacques Languirand and Striker Schneiderman, by Jack Gray, were Canadian. The third play which the Centre later staged was The Knacker's ABC by Boris Vian. These productions were received with mixed sentiments by audience and critic alike. The general consensus was that the Centre was not yet living up to its potential. It appeared that the Centre was not really for the free use of all. "Care and discretion," said Mr. Lawson, "must be used in the selection of group shows and events, as responsibility is taken for everything that goes on in the Centre."⁴ To protect the expensive technical equipment, and to comply with union regulations, groups were obligated to use the Centre's stage and technical crews. The plain but massive building did not invite the casual passerby to

² Sally Sales, "The Saint Lawrence Centre and its people," Performing Arts in Canada, Volume VII, Number 2, pp.10-11.

³ Ibid., p.11.

⁴ Ibid.

wander in; traditional restraints still held. Many people expressed their doubts about the entire project, even before its completion.

Ed Mirvish, for example, said:

The project doesn't make sense. O'Keefe Centre has many dark weeks and can't find enough good product to keep open continuously. The Royal Alex is in the same boat.⁵

A supportive view was expressed by Arnold Edinborough who demanded:

"Why don't we put our money into performers before we sink it into buildings?"⁶ Jim Gerrard, of Theatre Passe Muraille, agreed with this statement. He said:

. . . think of all the millions of dollars that were spent during Centennial year on mortar and bricks, you know, theatre isn't real estate. Yet that's what we're spending our money on. We didn't need more theatres. We certainly didn't need the Saint Lawrence Centre for that kind of money. It's the dumbest thing ever done for the performing arts in Canada.⁷

Henry Tarvainen, the young resident director of the 1970 to 1971 season at the Centre, also believed that money needed to be channelled to the working artists and away from the buildings. The second season of the Centre conspicuously lacked a Canadian play but Tarvainen did produce a multi-media evening developed around the poetry of Robert Service.

⁵ Globe Magazine, op. cit., p.10.

⁶ Ibid., p.11.

⁷ Betty Lee, "Can these directors come up with an answer?", Globe Magazine, February 21, 1970, pp.14-15.

Tarvainen auditioned the Centre's 1970 to 1971 company, which replaced the original Theatre Toronto group. The young director once again repeated the Centre's original concept of "community":

Theatre today has to be indigenously related to the community. It has to serve the needs of the community. Nothing should be impossible in theatre.⁸

The Saint Lawrence Centre, unfortunately, often made certain productions nearly impossible:

It's important to us to have better box office . . . I think we will have. But in theatre the financial situation is always tight, especially with this place because we're dealing with union crews, which cost a fortune. That puts production costs up a lot. Equipment, sets, it's all expensive.⁹

In April, 1971, two one-act Canadian plays, Bland Hysteria by John Palmer, and Westbound 12:01 by Brock Shoveller were staged in the Town Hall. The 1971 to 1972 season of five plays includes two full-length plays by Canadians.

Somewhat more experimental is the underground theatre movement which really began in the summer of 1970, when the New Director's Group, which included Henry Tarvainen, Martin Kinch, Ken Gass, Jim Gerrard, Martin Brenzell, John Palmer and Jack Messenger, organized Toronto's Underground Theatre Festival. The Festival included approximately one hundred events, and ran from August 19 to September 6.

⁸Daniel Stoffman, "Saving the Theatre: 'Invest in talent, not in buildings,'" Star, September 19, 1970, p.67.

⁹Ibid., p.67.

Plays, puppet theatre, concerts and "happenings" occurred in the Town Hall of the Saint Lawrence Centre, at the Global Village and on the streets. The Saint Lawrence Centre was, at first, hesitant to let the Underground Theatre Festival use the Town Hall, but the Festival was eventually allowed this privilege at the cost price of \$3,000.¹⁰ Many of the Toronto groups which were involved were refused grants to take part in the Festival . . . "They were afraid, they felt we were too radical . . . they asked us if we were going to use foul language and nudity."¹¹ The Festival, however, was a success and raised optimistic hopes for the future. The audiences were enthusiastic and involved. Henry Tarvainen noted:

There was a sense of euphoria about it. Most of the groups were ecstatic about the general feeling . . . Theatre suffers terribly from pomposity. People walk in and they're supposed to be very reserved and then sit there and wait for some momentous orgasmic experience. The sense of religious awe that surrounds most theatre buildings in this country is absurd.¹²

The new underground theatres, such as the Factory Lab, on Dupont Street, have done away with this awe for buildings. The Factory Lab's theatre is a large reconverted, bakery truck depot, over a garage. There are no padded seats, no air-conditioning units. The audience is free to sit on wooden chairs, or on the floor. The main

¹⁰Susan Perly, "Factory Theatre," Guerilla, Number 5, July 31, 1970, pp.16-17.

¹¹Ibid., p.17.

¹²Stoffman, op. cit.

motive for the Factory's existence is the production of new and original Canadian plays. Organizer and director Ken Gass came from an academic background. He did undergraduate work at the University of British Columbia, and graduate work in Toronto before completing his required year at Teacher's College. Gass is typical of the intelligent and creative young man in the New Director's Group. He is also one of the most volatile. He sympathizes with the new and untried playwright who faces great obstacles in trying to get his plays accepted for production. In Gass' opinion the established theatres such as Stratford received money which they didn't deserve. These theatres

. . . have 'token' Canadian workshops -- playwrights like John Herbert are asked to submit scripts . . . Then they present them once . . . in their rehearsal rooms. And that's the extent of what they do for Canadian scripts.¹³

Gass wanted to organize a theatre which produced relevant, truly Canadian material. Since the beginning of the Factory Lab, in the summer of 1970, many new plays have been staged. An Act of Violence, by Jason Richards, We Three, You and I, by Bill Greenland, Creeps, by David Freeman, and Two Countries, by Joseph Addison were among these plays. The playwrights, director, actors and stage crew receive a small percentage of the house in payment for their services. Since the maximum audience is approximately one hundred this stipend does not amount to much. In spite of this, the Factory Lab is alive and strong in its second season.

¹³ Ibid.

Another "underground" theatre that contributes a great deal to the development of Canadian playwriting is Theatre Passe Muraille. This group is so successful that it is rapidly becoming an "establishment" theatre, although its methods and purpose remain those of the original "underground" group which began in Rochdale College. Their present popularity is encouraging, particularly since they were forced to close briefly in 1969 due to financial problems. In the past year and a half, seven new Canadian plays were produced. Many were financial as well as critical successes. In 1970, Notes From Quebec, by Jean Claude Germain, Six of a Kind, by Louis Thompson, and The Hanging of William O'Donnell, by David Helwig were staged. In 1971, Out to Breakfast, by John Palmer, Doukhobors, by Paul Thompson, Wrestler's Son, by Louis Del Grande (Louis Thompson) and Vampyr "devised by" Shain Jaffe, Martin Kinch and Philip Schreiber, were produced.

In the Sixties, not only in Toronto but across Canada as well, another trend, a trend toward more experimental, multi-media and exploratory theatre had begun. In the early years of the Seventies, this trend has become bolder and more challenging. Henry Tarvainen, Saint Lawrence Centre director, observed

. . . we refer too much to antiquated traditions and obsolete ideas of form and content. We have to have the guts to redefine this form.¹⁴

Jim Gerrard, Theatre Passe Muraille director, called the majority of

¹⁴ Star, op. cit.

modern theatre "garbage" because

. . . it lulls you. You go primarily to be entertained and to relax. You think you deserve it. But you don't. I mean, nearly everyone agrees there is something terribly wrong. We should be able to say to the poor, tired banker, 'Look man, I'm sorry we're not going to lull you tonight . . . We've got to give you a piece of theatre that will make you think. We'll try to make it funny. We'll try to make it entertaining. But we do have something here that might change the terrible direction in which we're going.'¹⁵

Playwright Jacques Languirand found modern theatre "boring" and predicted:

It has to go back to its origin -- religion. I don't mean religion in the orthodox sense. I mean voodoo. Magic. The Ceremonial . . .¹⁶

Even Toronto audiences, often considered apathetic during the Sixties, are showing signs of becoming a more vital force. Audiences are turning

. . . to the technological, the use of film, multi-media, light, different techniques. And to the Happening. The unpredictable and the spontaneous . . . There's no future whatever in continuing to make carbon copies.¹⁷

Milton Carman, executive director, Province of Ontario Council for the Arts, predicted a radical change in both theatre content and future

¹⁵ Betty Lee, "Can these directors . . . ," op. cit., p.15.

¹⁶ Betty Lee, "Theatre, tried, trad and tribal," Globe Magazine, February 21, 1970, pp.4-7.

¹⁷ Ibid. , p.6.

audiences;

The impact of the young on the arts is enormous. Theatre will be used as a spearhead in the revolutionary, anarchistic, iconoclastic movement that is invading the entire field. In the future, people will go to the theatre at their own peril. The theatre will switch audiences on, incite them to all kinds of behavior . . . theatre will cease to be the creamy, entertaining medium it is today.¹⁸

The playwright of course still faces many problems. Although there has been an increase in the production of Canadian plays, there is no corresponding increase in their publication. The playwright is still inadequately subsidized. There are encouraging signs for the future, however, the most recent of which is the fact that Canadian playwrights, having grown in numbers and in self-confidence are finally organizing themselves to remedy their recurring problems. Two playwright's conferences took place in Canada in the summer of 1971. The first conference, sponsored by the Canada Council at Stanley House, Gaspé, Newfoundland, drew up a series of proposals regarding production, Canada Council grant policies, a playwright's union, playwright's workshops, copyright legislation, the Canadian Theatre Centre, the Canadian Radio-Television commission and the Canadian content of theatre companies.¹⁹ The most radical proposal was that Canadian theatres be forced to observe a fifty percent Canadian

¹⁸Ibid., p.7.

¹⁹"A Strange Enterprise, The Dilemma of the Playwright in Canada," Conclusions and recommendations of a Seminar Sponsored by the Canada Council at Stanley House, July 19 to 23, 1971, Available through the Canadian Theatre Centre.

content quota.²⁰ The second conference at Niagara-On-The-Lake, organized independently by Brian Doherty, the founder of the Shaw Festival, attracted thirty-seven interested and concerned people. At this meeting the main areas of discussion were:

- 1) How do we get plays written in Canada in the first place? and
- 2) When the plays are written, how do we make sure they get produced?²¹

The group re-emphasized the difficulties involved in the production of new plays but observed that, in many centres, new plays were well received by the audiences. The idea of a fifty percent Canadian content quota was reinforced with a maximum of flexibility suggested and with added incentives for those groups producing new Canadian plays. The two conferences made it clear what was necessary to ensure the preservation and future growth of playwriting in Canada. The summary of the Niagara-On-The-Lake meeting expresses optimism about the future, an optimism which the growth of playwriting in the Sixties bears out:

It was the feeling of the meeting that this gathering, and that held in the Gaspé, were hopeful signs that after many years of building and equipping theatres throughout Canada, and of training artistic and technical personnel, that now in the Seventies (it) would finally be possible to pay attention to what was to go into those theatres. It is the plays we produce for ourselves that will be the real justification for the great investment of time and money that has gone into our theatre. Obviously, it will be necessary to do a selling job to make this work,

²⁰Ibid.

²¹"Report on a Playwriting Conference, Niagara-On-The-Lake, August 14, 15, 1971," Available through the Canadian Theatre Centre.

but the results promise to be exciting and -- hopefully -- of lasting benefit to the country. The fact that certain patterns of production, of repertoire, and of funding have developed does not mean these patterns cannot be changed. The playwrights are anxious to get on with their job. They look to the arts councils and to the theatres to take a bold lead, to open up opportunities that would bring new plays of all kinds to our audiences in every one of our theatres, from coast to coast. The playwrights are determined that this should happen, and will do what they can to make it happen. Change was upon us, and we could be sure that it would be the most exciting development we have yet had in the theatre in Canada.²²

If the proposals developed by these representative groups are put into effect in the Seventies, Canadian playwrights will finally be able to express themselves as artists, without financial pressure, freely and exuberantly, making a significant contribution to the theatre community.

²²Ibid.

Appendix A

Canadian Plays Professionally Produced in Toronto, 1960 - 1969

- Basile, Jean. The Drummer Boy. Theatre Toronto at the Royal Alex, January 17 - February 4, 1968.
- Burgess, John. Jack and Jill. Colonnade Theatre, December 1 - 31, 1966. Pantomime.
- Carter, Floreen. Elsie Girl. The Poor Alex, 1964. Musical.
- Claman, Dolores, Richard Morris and Ted Wood. Mr. Scrooge. Crest Theatre, December 4 -, 1963 and December 1 -, 1965. Musical.
- Coulter, John. A Capful of Pennies. Aries Productions at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, March 22 - April 15, 1967.
- Dennis, Charles. "Everyone Except Mr. Fontana," an evening of three one-act plays: Aztecs and Orange Juice, T-96, Ever the Vanishing Virgin. Presented by John Prince at the Colonnade Theatre, November 12 - 30, 1968.
- Diver, Gordon. Take a Litter. Belmont Theatre Productions at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, March 27 - April 12, 1969.
- Dow, Robert. Jacques and Jill. Centre Stage, October 25, 1969. Musical.
- French, David. A Ring for Flori. Bohemian Embassy, December 1, 1963.
- Goulding, Dorothy and Jack Winter. The Queen of Hearts. Centre Stage, April, 1962. Children's Musical.
- Goulding, Dorothy. The Tinderbox. Toronto Museum Children's Theatre at Toronto Workshop Productions' Theatre, February 17 - 27, 1968.
- Gray, Jack. Emmanuel Xoc. Crest Theatre, April 21 - May 1, 1965.
- Harron, Donald. Anne of Green Gables. Royal Alex, 1967. Musical.

- Harron, Donald and Tommy Tweed. Here Lies Sarah Binks. Jane Mallett Association Production at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, February, 1968. Musical.
- Hearn, John. A Festival of Carol's. Theatre Toronto at the Royal Alex, May 20 - April 7, 1968.
- Herbert, John (Brundage). Fortune and Men's Eyes. Alliance Productions at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, October, 1967 and February, 1968.
- _____. Private Club and A Household God. Two one-act plays presented by the author at the Bohemian Embassy, 1962.
- Jacot, Michael. Honor Thy Father. Crest Theatre, March 9 -, 1960.
- Lager, Martin. The Master Mind and Who is on my side? Who? Village Playhouse, April 5 - 20, 1963.
- Languirand, Jacques. The Departures and The Partition. Canadian Players at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, 1966.
- Law, Eve. David. Bohemian Embassy, December 1, 1963.
- Malcolm, Ian. Thirty Days Hath December. Jonas - Malcolm Productions at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, November 6 - 17, 1968.
- Mannings, Alan. Evelyn. Crest Theatre, May 13 -, 1964. Musical.
- Moore, Maver. Johnny Belinda. Royal Alex, 1969. Musical.
- _____. Sunshine Town. Royal Alex, 1968. Musical.
- Nicol, Eric. Like Father, Like Fun. Royal Alex, July 14 - August 20, 1966.
- Nimchuck, Michael John. Three One-Acts: The Armoured Butterflies, The Barber, Four Dialogues to Death. Bohemian Embassy, February 15 - 19, 1966.
- _____. The Good Soldier Schweik. Toronto Workshop Productions, February 27 - April 12, 1969.
- Palmer, John. Memories of My Brother. Theatre Passe Muraille, 1969.
- Pearce, Alan. Where in Hell Does He Go From Here? Equity Productions at the Poor Alex, 1964.
- Peterson, Len. All About Us. Canadian Players at the Poor Alex, March 15 - 20, 1965. Revue.

- _____. Burlap Bags. Toronto Workshop Productions, May 6 - 21, 1960.
- _____. The Great Hunger. Arts Theatre Club at Centre Stage, November 10 - 27, 1960.
- Purdy, A.W. Point of Transfer. Theatre-in-the Dell, 1962.
- Richardson, Grace. You Are The Only Wasp I Know. Jonas-Malcolm Productions at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, November 6 - 17, 1968.
- Rill, Eli. The Emperor's New Clothes. Colonnade Theatre, weekends from November 10, 1965. Children's Musical.
- _____. The Magic Planet. Dell Tavern Theatre, 1966. Children's play.
- Robb, Dodi and Pat Patterson. The Dandy Lion. Toronto Museum Children's Theatre, January and October, 1965.
- _____. Henry Green and The Mighty Machine. Toronto Museum Children's Theatre, October - December, 1965.
- _____. Red Riding Hood. Toronto Museum Children's Theatre, February 1 -, 1964.
- Schwarz, Ernest J. Aladdin. At the North York Public Library, 1968. Children's play.
- _____. Cinderella. Studio Children's Theatre, 1966.
- _____. Hansel and Gretel. Studio Children's Theatre, 1968.
- _____. Jack and the Beanstalk. Studio Children's Theatre, 1966.
- _____. Pinocchio. Studio Children's Theatre, 1966.
- Schwarz, Ernest J. and John Davies. The Lion and the Lollypop. At the North York Public Library, 1966.
- Slade, Bernard. Simon Says Get Married. Crest Theatre, December 8 -, 1961.
- Swerdlow, Robert. Copper Mountain. Global Village, December, 1969. Children's dance drama.
- Taylor, Dean. No Park in The Fountain. Poor Alex, September 5 - 23, 1967.

Taylor, Ron. The Door and The Songwriter. Two one-act plays, Theatre-in-the Dell, 1962.

Wiggins, Christopher. Sinbad. Toronto Museum Children's Theatre, October 24 -, 1964.

_____. Please, Don't Sneeze. Toronto Museum Children's Theatre, 1966. Musical.

_____. Sleeping Beauty. Toronto Museum Children's Theatre, October 26 -, 1963.

Winter, Jack. . . . And They'll Make Peace. Toronto Workshop Productions, December 28 -, 1961.

_____. Before Compeigne. Toronto Workshop Productions, December, 1964. Colonnade Theatre, 1964, 1965.

_____. The Golem of Venice. Toronto Workshop Productions, March 17 - April 23, 1967.

_____. Happy Birthday, Death. Jonas-Malcolm Productions at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, November 6 - 17, 1968.

_____. Hey, Rube! Toronto Workshop Productions, 1960, 1966. Stratford, 1966, 1967.

_____. The Evil Eye. Toronto Workshop Productions, September 13 -, 1962.

_____. The Mechanic. Toronto Workshop Productions, October 14 -, 1965.

_____. The Death of Woyzeck. Toronto Workshop Productions, 1963, 1965.

Appendix B

Canadian Plays Produced by Educational Groups in Toronto, 1960 - 1969

Adelman, Howard. Root Out of Dry Ground. Hart House Theatre, 1961.

Ancevich, Jon. White Nigger Poodles. University College, University of Toronto, 1963.

Arrell, Douglas. Tourists and White Roses. Trinity College at Hart House, University of Toronto, 1963.

_____. How I Murdered My Husband. University of Toronto one-act playwriting competition, 1963. Honorable Mention.

Blackburn, George. There Go I. New Play Society School at the Museum Theatre, 1962.

Brown, Linda. The Handmaiden. University of Western Ontario at Hart House, 1963.

Canadian Drama Studio. Montreal Crime Wave. Centre Stage, 1961.

Charles, Leslie. Midnight Alley. Actor's Theatre, 1961.

Clark, Betty. As the Stone Age Passes. University College, University of Toronto, 1963.

Coulter, John. Deidre. Opera School, Royal Conservatory of Music, University of Toronto, 1965.

Coupal, Clare Foley. Time Running Out. New Play Society School, Museum Theatre, 1962.

Cunningham, Jack. Apertif. University Alumnae Dramatic Society at the Coach House, February 22 - March 1, 1968.

Hughes, Alan. A Hole in The Halo. Women's Union Theatre, University of Toronto, 1965.

_____. The Leaves of Autumn. School of Graduate Studies, University of Toronto, 1963.

Hughes, Alan and Georgi Nachoff. Split. Hart House, 1964. Musical.

- Hunter, Martin. The Snow Queen. Artists Workshop Productions at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, December, 1966. Children's play.
- _____. Young Hunting. Hart House, 1968.
- Jackson, Graham. The Sisters of Mercy. Victoria College, University of Toronto, February 17, 1969.
- Kardish, Lawrence. Goebble's Gobbledygook. Carleton University at the Colonnade Theatre, March 18 - 19, 1966.
- Matthews, Lawrence. A Child Shouldn't Worry About The Bomb. University College, University of Toronto, 1963.
- McCallum, George and Alexander Leggatt. Pickwick Papers. Hart House, 1963. Musical.
- O'Carroll, Jerry. The Canadian Lynx. Trinity College, December, 1969.
- Peters, Bill. And I'll be Don Quixote. Victoria College, University of Toronto, 1964. Musical.
- Polley, Michael B. The Song is Far Away. University Alumnae Dramatic Society, November 9, 16, 23, 1969. Dramatic reading.
- Porter, Ian. Mr. Terpid's Inquest. University of Toronto, 1963.
- Reaney, James. The Easter Egg. University Alumnae Dramatic Society at the Coach House, 1962.
- _____. One-Man Masque. The Compact Six at the Poor Alex, July 10 - 15, 1967. University of Toronto Drama Centre, March 7 - 10, 1969.
- Reiss, Murray. Pretzels are not for Breakfast and Maybe not even for Lunch. University College, University of Toronto, 1963.
- Reoch, Richard. Phaeton's Birthday. Prospero Productions and the Trinity College Dramatic Society at the Poor Alex, November 5 - 9, 1968.
- _____. Songs for The Coal Forest Children. Trinity College Dramatic Society at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, 1969.
- _____. Under The Sea to The Sunrise. University of Toronto at the Poor Alex, December 19 - 23, 1967.

- Ryga, George. The Ecstasy of Rita Joe. University Alumnae Dramatic Society at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, November 12 - 22, 1969.
- Saunders, James. A Scent of Flowers. Campus Players at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, June 29 - July 15, 1967.
- Strauss, Ernie. Wake Me When Its Over. Hart House, 1968.
- Such, Peter. The Elephant's Graveyard. School of Graduate Studies, University of Toronto, 1963.
- Tolle, Hans-Werner. Jesus: A Parable in Thirteen Lessons. Trinity College, University of Toronto, 1968.
- Veighney, Rose. The Sojourners. University College, University of Toronto, 1963.
- Watson, Wilfred. The Trial of Corporal Adam. University Alumnae Dramatic Society, 1963.
- Weiks, Ronald. Moir. Victoria College Bob Revue at Toronto Central Library Theatre, November 20 - 23, 1968.
- Youell, Jack. The Crossing. University of Toronto, 1963.
- Zysman, Simon. The Accident. University of Toronto, 1963.

Appendix C

Canadian Plays Produced by Non-Professional and Semi-Professional Theatre Groups in Toronto 1960 - 1969

- Barton, Keith. The Carving. The Communicators at the Colonnade Theatre, September 9 - 23, 1968.
- Baumal, Syd. Cayuga. Musical Comedy Pioneers at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, August 23 - September 4, 1965.
- Beggs, James. Train of Thought. Interval Club, 1962. A dramatized autobiographical poem, produced by the author.
- Bordeniuk, Steve. Gin Rummy. New Venture Players at the Garret Theatre, November 7 - December 8, 1968.
- Brickenden, Catherine. No Red Carpet. Glenvale Players, C.N.I.B., 1964.
- Brooke, Naomi. If I Catch You Praying. Temple Emanu-El Players at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May 25 - 26, 1963.
- Burch, Ted. The Rise and Fall of Marvin Derwent. Status Theatre Productions, 1963.
- Burgess, Ivan. Horsehoe House. New Venture Players at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, April 14 - 18, 1965.
- Burgess, John Charles. A Stranger Unto My Brethren. Questers Theatre at the Poor Alex, January 24 - 29, 1966. Merger Productions at the Colonnade Theatre, November 10 - 26, 1966.
- Cadogan, Elda. Rise and Shine. Whiteoaks Community Theatre at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May, 1964. Ontario Festival of Drama.
- Cameron, William. "Three from the Asylum": Ascension, In Transit, The Mirror. Toronto Chamber Theatre at the Poor Alex, October 11 - 16, 1965.
- Corfield, David. The Stage is Black. New Venture Players at the Coach House, May 19 - 28, 1966.

- Coulter, John. Holy Manhattan. Toronto West End Players, 1962.
- _____. Oblomoff: Portrait of a Russian Gentleman. Arts and Letters Club, 1962.
- _____. Sleep, My Pretty One. Centre Stage, April 14, 1961.
- Davies, Robertson. Eros at Breakfast. The Central Players YMCA at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May, 1964.
- _____. Fortune, My Foe. New Canadian Theatre at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, November 29 - December 10, 1967.
- Dobbs, Irving. Suburbia. Beth Am Synagogue, 1962. Musical.
- Dow, Robert. Who Killed the Toymaker? Thistletown Players at the Poor Alex, May 14 - 18, 1968.
- Dyer, Charles. Battle of a Simple Man. Oakville Players at the Poor Alex, January 18 - 22, 1966.
- Evans, Maurice. Oliver Twist. Questors Theatre at the Colonnade Theatre, December 13 - 24, 1965.
- Gass, Den. Light. Theatre Passe Muraille, December 8 - 12, 1969. Multi-media.
- Hendry, Thomas. Fifteen Miles of Broken Glass.
- Herbert, John. The Lady of the Camellias. New Venture Players at the Victoria Auditorium, 1964.
- _____. The World of Woyzeck. Garret Theatre, 1969.
- Jack, Donald. Exit Muttering. Produced by the author at the House of Hambourg Theatre, January 24, 1962.
- Jacot, Michael. The Man With The Red Hat. Don Mill Players, 1961.
- Johnson, Carol. "One Plus One Plus One . . .": The Day the Shooting Started, I Wish, The Hang-Up. Three one-act plays by the Theatre Company of Toronto at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, August 4 - 7, October 18 - 23, 1966.
- Joudry, Patricia. Three Rings for Michelle. John Fisher Community Theatre at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May 14 - 15, 1966.
- Karavas, Ben. Is He a Man? The Toronto Repertory Theatre at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May 25 - 29, 1966.

- Keogh, Aidan. Incident in Rosedale. New Venture Players, Garret Theatre, 1968.
- Kuper, Jack. Sun in My Eyes. York Community Theatre, 1960.
- Langford, Ernest. Death is a Tree. "Q" Theatre Centennial Project at the Colonnade Theatre, February 2 - 5, 1966.
- Lippman, Anna. The Babies. Globe Collegiate Drama Club and The Oakville "Golden Round" Players, at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May 1, 1965. Ontario Festival of Drama.
- Markowitz, Harvey. The Gallery. Poor Alex, 1969.
- _____. Land on my Property. Poor Alex, January 11 - 20, 1968.
- _____. Six Cars a Year. Poor Alex, October 9 - 19, 1967.
- McPherson, James. Hard Times. Dickens Fellowship Players at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, April 7 - 11, 1964 and Colonnade Theatre, 1964.
- Monture, Audre. End of Summer. St. Louis Theatre Company, Pointe Claire, Montreal at the Poor Alex, Spring, 1965.
- Mosel, Ted. Impromptu. Broadview Barn Players at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May 4, 1963. Ontario Festival of Drama.
- Parker, Blaine. Tomorrow's Child. Produced by the author at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, September 9 - 26, 1964. Musical.
- Parkhill, Francis. Cold Storage. Ajax Drama Workshop at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May 2, 1965. Ontario Festival of Drama.
- _____. Somewhere There's My Soul. Ajax Drama Workshop at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May 1, 1965. Ontario Festival of Drama.
- Reaney, James. The Three Desks. London Little Theatre at Burton Auditorium, York University, 1967.
- Ringwood, Gwen Pharis. Still Stands the House. Eramosa Junior Farmers at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May 1, 1965. Ontario Festival of Drama.
- Roth, Andre. It's All in the Book. North York Little Theatre, 1961.

- Ryga, George. Indian. Yritys A.C. Players at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, May 2, 1964. Ontario Festival of Drama.
- Seager, Joan. Never Look a Gift Horse in the Yashmak. Trinity Aurora Branch A.Y.P.A. at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, April 30, 1965. Ontario Festival of Drama.
- Sinclair, Lister. The Blood is Strong. Questors Theatre, 1963.
- Swarbrick, Brian. Return to the Mountain. Questors Theatre at the Royal Alex, 1964.
- Waite, Byron Allan. The Sparrows of God. Toronto West End Players at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, February 20 - 25, 1961.
- Wayne, Paul. Kiss Mama Goodbye. Temple Players, 1962.
- Wilbraham, Catherine. A Little of What You Fancy. Questors Theatre, October, 1963. Musical adaption by Ruth Green and John Burgess.
- _____. When the Bough Breaks. Richmond Hills Curtain Club, 1963.
- Williams, Norman. Can You Hear Niagara Falls? Central Players YMCA, February, 1968.
- _____. "On the Flip Side": Take to the Trees, He Didn't Even Say Goodbye, The Garden. Questors Theatre, 1964. Three one-act plays.
- Windsor, David. Doberman. Garret Theatre, November 7 - December 8, 1968.
- Witkin, Steve. Once Upon a Bookworm. Second Century Players at the Colonnade Theatre, 1968. Children's musical.
- Wright, Dorothy. A Cradle of Willow. Broadview Barn Players, November 24, 1961.
- Vienneau, Bob. Markham Street. Etobicoke Light Opera Company at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, September 17 - 20, 1969.
- Volinska, John. Six Days and a Dream. Drao Players at the Toronto Central Library Theatre, January 29 - February 3, 1962.

Appendix D

A Partial List of the Canadian Plays Produced in English Canada in the 1960's (Excluding the City of Toronto)

- Addison, Joseph. The Masque of Wilde. University of Guelph, 1969.
- Allan, Ted. The Secret of the World. Theatre Workshop, London, England, 1962.
- Angel, Leonard. The Ballad of Étienne Brulé. University of British Columbia, 1968.
- Barker, H. A Soft Answer. Summerside Little Theatre, Prince Edward Island, 1963.
- Bawtree, Michael. The Last of the Czars. Avon Theatre, Stratford, 1966.
- Berton, Pierre. Paradise Hill. Charlottetown Festival, 1967.
- Blackburn, George C. A Button Missing. Garden Centre Theatre, Vineland, September, 1961. Kawartha Summer Theatre, Lindsay, Ontario, 1967.
- _____. A Walk Through the Valley. Winner of the 25th Annual Ottawa Little Theatre Playwriting Competition, 1963.
- Bowron, A.L. The Fig is Green. Duncan Little Theatre, British Columbia, 1961.
- Brainen, Carole. Mother May I take a step? Canadian University Drama Festival, Ottawa, 1964.
- Brown, Lennox. I Have to Call My Father. State University, New York, 196?
- _____. Snow-dark Sunday. Museum Theatre, 196?
- _____. The Meeting. Ottawa Little Theatre "Ranking play" series. Performing Arts Magazine, volume VII, number 4, pp.20-27.
- Brown, Linda. The Handmaiden. University of Western Ontario, 1963.

- Cadogan, Elda Magill. Rise and Shine. Durham House, Durham, Ontario, 1966.
- Cahill, Tom. Tomorrow Will Be Sunday. St. John's Players, 1967. Adaption.
- Campbell, Gounod. Summit Conference. Peterborough Players, 1962. Ontario-winning entry in Orono One-Act Play Festival.
- Campbell, John G. The Groaning Board. Theatre Workshop, Ottawa, 1964.
- Chambers, Jack. Toronto-London-One-Way-Gray Coach Lines. London, Ontario, 196?
- Clavell, James. Countdown to Armageddon. Playhouse Theatre, Vancouver, 1966.
- Cohen, M. Charles. Land Before Time. Instant Theatre, Montreal, 1968.
- _____. The Member from Trois-Rivières. Written for the National Bicentenary of Canadian Jewry, 1759-1959, 196?
- Coupal, Clare Foley. Allure and the Feminine Mystique. Webster Groves, St. Louis, Missouri, 1965.
- Cowrie, Victor. The Magic Trumpet. Manitoba Theatre Centre, 1969.
- Cox, Terry. The Dance. Canadian Place Theatre, Stratford, 1969.
- Crocker, Brian. The Duel. Dalhouse University Theatre, 1967.
- Cunningham, Jack. Marise, a play in three acts. Act I: The Project; Act II: Goodbye Marise; Act III: Wisp in the Wind. Western Quebec Regionals, March 1966. Act II, Canadian University Drama Festival, 1966. Act III, Canadian University Drama Festival, Montreal, 1965. Best Canadian entry. Yale Drama Festival, 1965. "Best Original Play." Published by S. French, New York, c. 1965.
- _____. Whimidea. Sir George Williams University, 1963.
- Cunnington, Ray. The Peace Makers. Read at the Montreal Playwright's Workshop, 1963.
- Daniels, Dan. The Audition. Western Quebec Regional Festival entry in the Dominion Drama Festival, March - April, 1965. Best Canadian Play. Théâtre de la Place, Montreal, 1965.

- _____. Come Unto Me. Sir George Williams University, 1962.
Best Play in The Inter-Varsity Drama Festival.
- Davis, Rae. Daily News From the Whole World, a trilogy of assemblages
for the theatre: Transistor, Projector and Dissector.
London, Ontario, 1965?
- Dobby, Allan. And Roses. Arts Club Theatre, Vancouver, 1965.
- Douglas, Gavin. The Wooden World. Neptune Theatre, Halifax, 1967.
- Doyle, James. The Queen's Hard Bargain. King's College, Halifax,
1963.
- Edgell, Mimi. Beyond our Times. Victoria, British Columbia, 1963.
- Euringer, Alfred. Blind Man's Bluff. Stratford Festival, 1960.
- Fairlie, J. Neil. The Door. Deep River Players, 1962.
- Franklin, June. Take Away My Shadows. Whitehorse, Yukon Territory,
1963.
- _____. Welcome, Baby Dear. A play, published in Performing
Arts Magazine, Volume VII, Number 3, pp.33-39.
- Furness, Mark. What Are You Doing in my Bed, Whoever You Are?
Scheduled for off-Broadway, 1963.
- Gélinas, Gratien. Bousille and the Righteous. Vancouver Festival,
August, 1961. Maritime Tour (bilingual), Fall, 1961.
Comédie Canadienne Company, Montreal, 1961. Published in
Toronto by Clarke, Irwin, 1961, as Bousille and the Just.
- _____. Yesterday the Children were Dancing. Charlottetown
Festival, 1967. Published by Clarke, Irwin, 1967.
- Goodman, Stuart. Two original one-act plays. Produced by the author
at the Circle Theatre, Montreal, 1962.
- Gray, Jack. Louisbourg. Neptune Theatre, Halifax, 1964.
- _____. The Teacher. Avon Theatre, Stratford, 1961.
- Grudeff, Marian and Raymond Jessel. Life Can Be Like Wow.
Charlottetown Festival, 1969.
- Gurik, Robert. API; a play in two parts. Outrement, Quebec, 1966.
- _____. Hearts. Outrement, Quebec, 196-?

Harron, Donald and Norman Campbell. The Adventures of Private Turvey. Charlottetown Festival, 1966. Adaption.

_____. Anne of Green Gables.
Charlottetown Festival, 1965.

_____. The Broken Jug. Guelph Little Theatre, 1967. Winner in The Dominion Drama Festival, 1967.

Hassinger, James. An Unemployed Jester is Nobody's Fool. Loyola College, Montreal, 1963.

Hawkins, W.J. Class Will Tell. 1962, First prize winner in the Nova Scotia Playwriting Competition.

_____. Going Under. Second prize winner, as above.

Hendry, Tom. Fifteen Miles of Broken Glass. Winnipeg, 196-?

_____. The Satyricon. Avon Theatre, Stratford, 1969.

_____. Trapped. Manitoba Theatre Centre, 1962.

Henry, Ann. Lulu Street. Manitoba Theatre Centre, 1967.

Herbert, John. Fortune and Men's Eyes. Stratford Workshop, October, 1965. Cultural Centre of Old Montreal, November 22 - December 10, 1967. Vancouver Playhouse, "Stage 2" at the Arts Club, October, 1968. Blue and White Playhouse at the Studio, National Arts Centre, Ottawa, December, 1969.

Hirsch, John. Sauerkrangle. Manitoba Theatre Centre, 1965.

Hulme, George. Displaced Affections. Bristol "Old Vic," 1964.

_____. The Lionel Touch. West End production, London, England, 1968.

Humphries, James. The Sermon. Dalhousie University Theatre, 1967.

Hunter, Martin. Out Flew the Web and Floated Wide. Dominion Drama Festival at St. John's, 1967.

Irving, John. The Fur Trade. Red Barn, Jackson's Point, 1966.

Jack, Donald Lamont. The Canvas Barricade. Stratford Shakespearian Festival, August, 1961.

Joudry, Patricia. The Man with the Perfect Wife. Palm Beach, Florida, 1965.

- Kardish, Lawrence. Occasional Seasoning. Canadian Place Theatre, Stratford, Ontario, 1969.
- Kelly, Arthur J. He Hanged His Son. Brantford Little Theatre, 1969.
- Kendall, Ralph. Retribution. Emerald Players, North Burnaby, British Columbia, 1961.
- Kent, Frazer. Crossroads and The Secret. "The Last Stage" Company, Chicago, 1963.
- _____. The Stricken. Instant Theatre, Montreal, 1968.
- Lager, Martin. The Life and Times of Practically Nobody, or, How I learned to drop out and love a flower. London Little Theatre, Ontario, 1967.
- _____. The Newsmaker. Kawartha Summer Theatre, Lindsay, Ontario, 1967.
- _____. Out Flew the Web and Floated Wide. The Central Ontario Drama League Players, 1967.
- _____. Who is on my side? Who? Studio Workshop Productions, Manitoba Theatre Centre, 1962.
- Langley, Chuck. The Waiting Room. Dalhousie University Theatre, 1967.
- Malcolm, Ian. God Save McQueen. Published in Performing Arts in Canada, Volume 6, number 4, Fall 1969, pp.27-33.
- Marier, John. The King of the Thousand Islands. Ottawa Theatre for Children, 1965.
- McCreath, Jack. Barranca. Theatre Associates at Walterdale Playhouse, Edmonton, 1962.
- Moore, Maver, Alan Lund and John Fenwick. Johnny Belinda. Charlottetown Festival, 1968.
- Murphy, Arthur L. The Breadwinner. Halifax, 196?
- _____. Charlie. Neptune Theatre, Halifax, 1967.
- _____. The First Falls on Monday. Kawartha Summer Theatre, Lindsay, Ontario, 1967.
- _____. The Sleeping Bag. Neptune Theatre, April 1967.

- Nichol, James W. Tub. Stratford Theatre Workshop, 1969. Published in Performing Arts Magazine, Volume VII, number 1, pp.21-27, 1970.
- Nicholson, Tony. Le Petit Homme. Intimate Stage, Victoria, B.C., 1963.
- Nicol, Eric. Beware the Quickly Who. Holiday Theatre, Victoria, British Columbia, 1967.
- _____. The Fourth Monkey. Vancouver Playhouse, 1968.
- _____. Like Father, Like Fun. Vancouver Playhouse, 1966. Montreal, 1968.
- _____. Please Do Not Adjust Your Son. New York, 1967.
- Orton, Mrs. John P. 5BX in History; a social satire. 1962, 24th Annual One-Act Playwriting competition winner, Sponsored by the Ottawa Little Theatre.
- Palmer, John. Confessions of a Necrophile. University of Guelph, 1969. Acadia University, Nova Scotia, 196?
- _____. I'm Going to Pin a Medal on the Girl I Left Behind. 1967, Canadian University Drama League winner.
- _____. Memories for my Brother. Canadian Place Theatre, Stratford, 1969.
- _____. Visions of an Unseemly Youth. 1965, First prize winner at the Canadian University Drama League.
- Paolozzi, Anne. The Castle Builders. Ottawa Theatre Workshop, 1964.
- Parkhill, Frances. A Pinch, A Pat and a Purpose. Instant Theatre, Montreal, 1967.
- Peterson, Len. All About Us. Manitoba Theatre, 1964.
- _____. Look Ahead. Manitoba Theatre Centre, 1962.
- Ravel, Aviva. The Adventures of Mendel Fish. 1965, Winner of first honorable mention, National Playwriting Awards, London, Ontario.
- _____. Shoulder Pads. Theatre de la Place, Montreal, 1966.

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